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**SOCIALIST
LABOUR
PARTY —
THE ROAD TO
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LWR'S 'DEMOCRACY'

**IWG what
we stand for**

IRAN

PERSPECTIVES

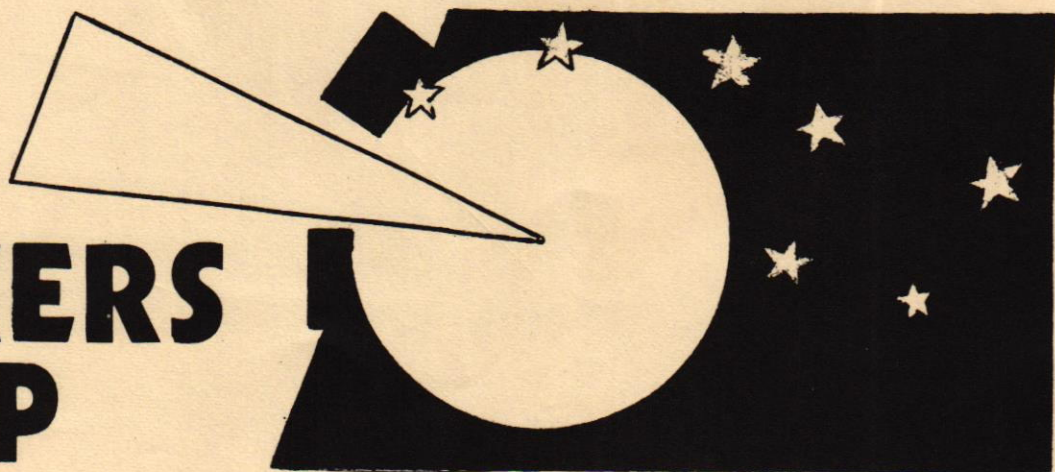
**TAX FIGHT &
WAGES**

CONTRACEPTION

ELECTIONS

REPRESSION

**IRISH
WORKERS
GROUP**



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SOCIALIST
LABOUR
PARTY —
THE ROAD TO
BANKRUPTCY

IT'S DEMOCRACY

IRISH
WORKERS
GROUP

May 30th 1979

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E L E C T I O N S : C R I T I C A L S U P P O R T V O T E

Southern Local Elections: Against all bourgeois parties of the capitalist class, we call for a critical-support vote for the bourgeois Labour Party which bases itself on the trade unions in such a way as to hold back the class and sell out our needs. The method we employ is to put the Labourites where they can be seen and exposed by the demands and joint action of workers who follow Labour, and revolutionaries. (See page 45, this issue, and our programme generally.) Second preference to Provisional Sinn Fein candidates in defence of anti-imperialist fighters from state repression, and as the context for united front action against repression based on the working class without mitigating our criticisms of the Provos. (See our criticisms of the Provos, pp. 7, 8, 32). Third, 4th preferences etc. for the minor socialist groups who nowhere offer any revolutionary alternative to reformism, and the same call for joint concrete action of their supporters.

EURO-ELECTION: Lacking the resources whereby we would most certainly use this election for our own agitation and propaganda through standing a candidate, we call for the critical support vote for the Labour Party - that is in so far as the EEC offers marginally or potentially any chance of putting them to the test, in action.

In the North, critical support vote for Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey but unremitting opposition to any alliance with or support from the I.I.P. - Break with the I.I.P.! For mobilising action! (See our statement, pp. 7, 8, 32)

IRAN

BREAK WITH THE MULLAHS!

BREAK WITH THE BOURGEOISIE!

It was inevitable that the alliance of forces which overthrew the Shah of Iran would splinter afterwards. Khomeini and the Mullahs are firmly set on establishing a repressive and reactionary rule from the Mosques in which the Shia hierarchy will have veto over every law passed in the Islamic republic and in which Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Azerbaijanis etc. will be nationally oppressed.

The aim of this rule, irrespective of the Muslim nationalist anti-imperialist disguise it wears, is to make peace with world imperialism and to defend private property and capitalist relations. The undemocratic referendum, which gave the pseudo choice of saying Yes or No (balloting openly under the eyes of Shi'ite scrutineers) to an Islamic Republic, has greatly strengthened the hand of the Mullahs and Khomeini.

The Iranian bourgeoisie have the basic aim of the boss class everywhere, to save their property and wealth. To do this they must defend also foreign capital against the threat of expropriation and thus side with imperialism. Their most able representatives are to be found in the "National Front" and the vacillating premiership of Bazargan.

Peasants, National Minorities, Women

The growing polarisation of classes in Iran raises the prospect of a civil war or the emergence of an Islamic military Bonapartism basically subservient to imperialism as was the Shah. In settling this question in its own favour the Iranian working class must win the allegiance of the peasants for an armed opposition to Khomeini and the bourgeoisie. Khomeini's Committee militias have been defending Persian landlords who were being driven from their estates by armed peasants. In Turkestan, armed clashes have occurred when the Committees opened fire on a meeting of Turkoman autonomists. Iran is a prison-house of nationalities, and the struggle for national freedom is explosive. The highest expression of this so far has been the struggle of the Kurds against militia loyal to Khomeini. As a result of their armed action against Islamic national oppression they have secured limited promises of provision for self rule. A key task of Iranian revolutionaries must be the fight to bring the power of Iranian workers - especially the strike action of oil workers - to the support of the struggle for national freedom of Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Turkomen etc.

A key step in breaking Iranian workers from Islam nationalism will be the fight to win them to support and champion the democratic rights of women who are under offensive from Khomeini's movement which seeks to push them back into their traditional subjection.

The Working Class

Most vitally, the period leading up to summer has seen increasing evidence of workers organising themselves in conflict with the new regime. 3.5 million are jobless. Scores of factories deserted by the pro-Shah owners lie idle. Serious shortages are reported. Oil exports are only a fraction of pre-revolutionary figures. Carpet exports have only resumed on a limited scale. Cotton output, in the past the largest foreign-exchange earner after oil, is only meeting local demand and crops (fruit, nuts for export) are badly hit by the winter and lack of attention during the revolution. Inflation is running at 40 to 60%.

In factories workers are establishing new trade union organisations and committees. There have been major and growing demonstrations of the unemployed in Iran's cities, masses of them being led by their 'Bekharan' to occupy the vestibule of the Ministry of justice in Tehran, wresting concessions of £60 per month grants from a reluctant regime. On May 10th Port workers at the country's biggest commercial port, Khorramshahr, struck and are on strike since. They have begun a direct fight to have Iran Terminal nationalised - a locally owned company with the contract to handle all cargo there.

Khomeini Committee Repression of Workers

There can be no longer any doubt that the Khomeini Committees are bracing themselves to become direct agents of counter-revolution. The main brunt of their repression will inevitably be the working class. Its focus will be the destruction of the workplace committees which have already instituted developed forms of workers' control and inspection. Both the organisations of the employed and unemployed workers are coming under the hammer from the Committees, the emergent National Guard and Mojahaddin-Englabi-Islami which is a new set of armed squads directly controlled by the Mosques to replace the now radicalised muslim guerillas of the Mojahaddin-e-Khalq.

In Ahwaz these forces have been used in an attempt to block the formation of independent trade unions. They have used thuggery to try unsuccessfully suppress the powerful oil workers strike committees.

In Tabriz Khomeini Committee ghuggery has been used in an attempt to censor and suppress literature from anyone but Khomeini's men. Activists from the Socialist Workers Party (HKS), the Iranian section of the USFI, were arrested while selling their paper. Though activists of the Tabriz Khomeini Committee sided with the HKS sellers the Khomeini officials have used incidents like this to weed out the vacillating elements from the committees.

The Left in Iran

Speaking in the French Communist Party's "L'Humanite" the General Secretary of the Iranian CP, Kianouri, has called for a popular front of all the forces to the left of Khomeini. This is a total sellout of workers and the their desperate need to organise independently of all bourgeois forces. It ties them to the apron strings of the National party and Bazargan. The maoist Fedayeen, though more activist, does not differ in kind from the CP. Their programme of an alliance of all progressive forces against imperialism and reaction left them trailing behind Khomeini.

The USFI

Nowhere in the USFI's material can one find even a clear statement of the Permanent Revolution strategy for Iran, namely that the bourgeois-democratic tasks of the Iranian revolution to be successful, must become a proletarian revolution. On the contrary, in an interview with Iranian 'trotskyists' in Socialist Challenge we find the following sole statement of aims (Oct 12th, '78):

"Iranian revolutionaries must call for the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy, its replacement by a republic, and the establishment of a Constituent Assembly freely elected through universal suffrage".

Having abandoned in practice the revolutionary transitional method, the USFI cannot see that soviets, workers' militia, and the proletarian revolution are the strategic goal to which all tactics must be decisively subordinated.

Solidarity (- continued on page 15)

UNITE AGAINST WAGE RESTRAINT

The two-to-one rejection by the unions on May 23rd of the National Understanding is one of the most important steps forward for the working class in ten years. It offers the real possibility of turning the tide on ten years of wage-restraint, naked class collaboration by the union leadership and virtual destruction of shop-floor leadership. But the weaknesses of the rank and file must be faced up to. Firstly, there is so far not even the beginning of a new alternative leadership to the bureaucracy which for so long has enforced the rule of the two-tier picket, the Employer-Labour Conference and uninterrupted National Wage Agreements, suspending rebel unions from Congress and isolating key strikes.

Those bureaucrats who knew the Understanding would be openly defied and thus called for a vote against in the dominant ITGWU, are no allies of the rank and file either. Along with Paddy Cardiff and Harold O' Sullivan, John Carroll and co. have been explicit in insisting on the need (their own need!) for 'some kind' of "national understanding". Their strategy will be to hold back wage claims, demoralise and behead any serious militancy and finally tie up the workers in the no-strike straight-jacket of a new Agreement.

Secondly, the 'left' bureaucrats of the more defiant unions are offering as an alternative merely sectional annual once-off wage claims in the midst of an economic crisis which demands a unified and ongoing struggle. Thirdly, the unions will be held responsible for new company-failures and redundancies; and temporary lay-offs in related industries will be used to break strikes. In this the bosses will have at least the passive aid of sections of the t.u. bureaucracy. Therefore, if free collective bargaining is not to be used as a weapon for the right-wing union leaders who shed crocodile tears for the lower paid in order to hold back the strong sections and sell them out, the following demands we believe are necessary as part of a full return to free collective bargaining.

1. Tie the Power of the Strong to the Weak: There must be fought for sharply in the unions the demand for common wage claims as a minimum, for full compensation for inflation (without restricting the right of any section to go for more) - on the basis of which the full official power of the unions will be pledged to absolute solidarity with all workers taking up this fight.
2. Preserve the value of wage increases: The common minimum claim must be in the first instance for a sliding scale of wages; for example £1 per week on the basic wage for every 1% rise in the Consumer Price Index, to be wrested from employers and government in the form of automatic rises with every rise in prices, through direct action and not through national agreements by bureaucrats who would only cut the indexation demand to a pittance. (For example, without such a demand annual 'round' increases would be eaten up by immediate price-hikes such as were announced directly after both this and the previous Wage Agreement votes.) The money-amount for all - to be worked out by the rank and file - is also a unifying feature as compared with percentage increases, and helps to bring up the lower paid. The fight also for an independent assessment of real price increases by the union rank and file and price watch committees is becoming more vital every day: fight for a working-class cost-of-living index!
3. Lower-paid: The fight for a national minimum income of at least £60 fully indexed, the fight for full equal pay, and for real increases, are essential elements of any adequate answer to the attack on living standards.

4. Unemployment: The fight to resist all redundancies, to re-employ the jobless while not relenting in the wage struggle means throwing the responsibility for the economic crisis back where it belongs - with the bosses in Ireland and internationally. This fight is only possible as part of building a labour rank and file movement on a programme of class-wide answers, based on the unions and the method of direct action. Similarly no serious concessions towards extending health and social services can be won except through such a rank-and-file movement. The demand for full lay-off pay is a crucial aspect of preserving solidarity when strikes lead to loss of production in related industries.

BUILD A NATIONAL SHOP-STEWARD'S MOVEMENT!

Build a Public Sector alliance of shop-stewards.

Build a 32-county rank and file movement to democratise the unions, the Congress and the trades councils, to put them on a war footing on a programme of opposition to the capitalist offensive'.

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THE CONGRESS CON-TRICK, THE POWU AND THE TAXATION FIGHT

The potential depth of the economic crisis is most keenly sensed by the bosses agents in the working class - the trade union bureaucracy. The two-faced union leadership were and are frightened for their own position and role as brokers which they know would be undermined by any wave of militant action for wage demands which the employers and state are determined not to concede.

The Congress bureaucrats had little difficulty in holding back on wage claims after the November Conference which vetoed new wage talks. In contempt of the Conference, they held secret talks with Government. Demoralisation against a background of deliberately isolated strikes and the absence of any alternative to a wage agreement in the major unions after three months made it possible for Congress to procure a mandate for formal talks on a social contract with Government, a mandate they quickly extended to include talks with the employers.

The key element of this confidence trick was the claim of the bureaucrats that the old National Wage Agreements were dead and that the new deal would "give the unions a say in social policy" - on job creation, health services, social welfare etc. This argument carried weight, representing as it does at the level of the leadership a keen appreciation of what we have always posed as a task of rank and file action, namely the need for political answers to stop the bosses taking back with one hand what they give with the other, the problem of a struggle on all fronts - inflation, basic wages, unemployment, equal pay and social services. While we argue for direct action by the rank and file and for demands on the union leaders, on all fronts, the bureaucracy cynically trade-off one need of the workers against the other to procure a "total package" of sellouts.

In this reformist appearance of "influencing" social policy, they have a powerful argument against the anti-wage agreement arguments of the trade union 'lefts' in ASTMS, AUEW/TASS, ATGWU etc. whose perspective of sectional bargaining on wages fails to answer the right wing charge that this leads to a "free-for-all meaning a free-for-some" at the expense of social welfare recipients and low paid workers. The answer to the "social contract" arguments is to address the problem of sectionalism in the context of free collective bargaining. By posing this alternative, we in no way give any quarter to the Labour lackeys of Fianna Fail such as Paddy Cardiff

(who pleads the cause of the lower paid to sell wage agreements but intervened at the WUI annual Conference in '78 to secure rejection of a call for a national minimum wage!), or his hangers-on in SFWP. We defend unconditionally the strikes of the NBU bus workers, AGEMOU and Leyland workers, the Post Office workers and others who have defied the NWAs. We oppose tooth and nail the petty-bourgeois poison of SFWP oracles such as Eoghain Harris who described these strikes as the adventurism of "pasty-faced boys going into the ring with a professional boxer" (speech for new wage talks, FWUI, Nov. '78). Harris' solution for the "boys to get together and hire a professional" to bargain on their behalf is a perfect description of the broker role of union officials substituting themselves for and sitting on the rank and file's real strength.

Taxation

While the wage talks were going on in March the resentment of the class at falling living standards exploded in unprecedented street demonstrations on March 12th, March 20th and May 1st on the issue of taxation. The demonstrations also represented the first major confrontation of the working class with the large-farmer capitalists. It was Fianna Fail's backing down on its regressive 2% sales levy on farmers, in response to the threats of the big farmer lobby who pleaded the real dilemma of the small farmers, which sparked off the marches for PAYE reform, "Tax the Farmers" and "Everybody Pay their Fair Share".

Despite the correctness of democratic demands for steeply progressive taxes on farmers, wealth tax etc., the tax campaign in its content in no way answered the problem of falling living standards and ran the danger of excusing social spending cuts by tax-cutting. Concrete and burning demands such as an end to the super-tax on married working women figured very little in the campaign which Congress publicly tried to sabotage and divert into Sunday marches and petitions instead of strikes. But the mass of workers came out in general strike action and took serious note of the treachery of the union leadership. Thus the rank and file were ill-inclined to vote in the new National Understanding which scarcely pretended to make up for price rises and offered an insulting concession on PAYE tax and a modified sales levy on farmers which is already being added to meat bills.

The IWG was the only far-left group to consistently mass-leaflet all of the major demonstrations in Dublin and Galway, warning against the bureaucracy's attempt to cynically contain the tax demands and use them as a bargaining counter to secure wage restraint. IWG was also the only group left of the reformist camp to have a member speak from the platform of any of the major demonstrations after successfully battling twice for a work-stoppage and march in Galway.

Post Office Workers Strike

Meanwhile the Post Office Workers Union was engaged in a bitter strike of over three months duration for a major wage claim, posing Fianna Fail its biggest concrete threat since taking office. Rather than pull out all the stops to win the strike, the ICTU threatened to suspend the union. Ironically this threat helped cement together an apparent split between the Union's leader Quinlan and the rank and file postmen led by Mick Hill who attacked the union leaders for having stood between the workers and the employer for years. In May the strikers organised mass pickets on the CIE parcels depot and the police were sent in to beat them into submission, a clear declaration of the Government's attempt to physically curb all effective picketing - a message strongly put across at MacDonalds too.

The failure of the Trades Councils, especially in Dublin, as yet, to marshal any solidarity for the POWU is in stark contrast to their leadership of the gigantic demonstrations and strikes on the comparatively abstract tax-reform demand.

The failure of the centrist groups on the same issue was indicated in the rejection by SWT of an IWG proposal to include the POWU strike as one of the planks of a public meeting against the National Understanding on May 5th. The committee set up from that meeting under Brian Trench's lead, which was mandated to produce mass-leaflets for use by shop-stewards against the National Understanding, produced nothing but letters to the papers. We believe a reconvening of the activists who met on May 5th is imperative now for a fight to copperfasten the return to free collective bargaining.

Leyland

An important lesson is to be drawn from the heroic struggle of the Leyland workers who stayed out in solidarity against the proposed redundancy of the Reg Armstrong car assemblers. Merrigan's ATGWU finally accepted redundancy terms; but not once during the strike did Merrigan's Socialist Labour Party intervene in the dispute on the basis of the only adequate demands for those workers, namely, Open the books, Work or full pay, and occupation to force nationalisation under workers' control without compensation linked to solidarity action from Leyland workers in Britain - all of which is part of the SLP programme!

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REPRESSION — BREAK WITH IIP!

The important relationship of the Provisional Republican movement to the Relatives Action Committees campaign can only be understood from the perspective of the Provisionals' overall republicanism and its analysis of the 'Irish question!'. Basically a conspiratorial organisation, the Provisionals only strategy is to physically drive the British Army out of the North, and as part of this the bombing campaign is claimed to wear down the 'resistance' of the British taxpayer. Being a military organisation they subordinate to the armed struggle all questions of political tactics in relation to support of the masses in the North, or of repression in the South or in Britain, as incidental to their technical ability to continue the armed campaign.

In the North in particular there is total opposition to any kind of struggle which might appear to confer legitimacy on the N.I. state. Thus, for the Provos, the struggle against repression is portrayed as an attempt to divert the republican masses into another 'civil rights' illusion, while for marxists it should begin from a focus on a number of key demands for democratic rights. The Provos' position was most clearly stated in the Derry SF central committee's attack on Bernadette Mc Aliskey's anti-repression EEC candidature:

"We reject all opportunists of the right or the left. B. Mc Aliskey is capitalising on the political ignorance of sincerely motivated relatives whose only concern is the immediate short-term welfare of prisoner sons and daughters. The aim of the prisoners goes far beyond mere P.O.W. status, an issue deliberately created by the Brit regime to divert people, time and energy from the main goal of national liberation." (Derry Journal, May 18th.)

It is this basically maximalist position of S.F. which makes them view any kind of developing mass movement as carrying a threat to

to the purity of their "physical force" tradition; for a mass movement clearly develops within forces and ideologies from the left and right which potentially may attempt to challenge the provos and their dominance in the anti-unionist ghettos. The 'purity' of the tradition is expressed in both abstentionism from all bourgeois elections under British rule (local elections under Leinster House are another thing entirely!) and a 'labour must wait' philosophy, the latter just as much a part of republicanism now as ever despite the opportunistic articles in Republican News about strikes and workers' struggles. The RAC to a very minor extent carried some threat to the Provos, not of course from the so-called marxists of the PD and SWT who never had any intention of fighting for workers involvement in the RACs. The threat was from the right - aided and abetted by the centrist socialists. For at Coalisland and other meetings since, the attempt by Farrell and his organisation has been to involve the Irish Independence Party and the SDLP in the RAC, into what they call a 'broad front', an Irish nationalist version of the popular front. It is this which has produced the 'major' differences inside the RAC and in turn has produced the Provo's determination to both emphasise the RAC support for the armed struggle as a means of keeping the IIP, CP and SDLP supporters out of it, at the same time as they arbitrarily call marches and meetings to demonstrate to the left whose prisoners are inside, and who has the real support on the streets.

Mc Aliskey's E.E.C. Election Campaign

The most complete triumph the Provos had over the hopelessly muddled and outmanoeuvred centrists of PD was the decision by the RAC not to support McAliskey who is backed by the centrists and the IIP in her bid for a seat in the European Parliament. It revealed all the left's big talk about the RAC's being 'independent' political bodies outside the control of the Provos for the fantasy it always was; for in addition to their substantial organisational control, ideologically their hold has never been challenged in any way by the opportunists of the PD and SWT. The decision of McAliskey to stand as a candidate illustrates both the extent this opportunism has taken her and the other centrists' groups down the road to electoral illusion-breeding, and the grip Republicanism really has on the RAC when it comes to the crunch.

Mc Aliskey, having abandoned in characteristic maverick fashion, the ISP 'party' she set up two years ago, reached an agreement with elements in the IIP around Pat Fahy, Coalisland solicitor and nationalist. The deal meant that she would call for support for him in the General Election against the SDLP, while he would support her candidature in the Euro-elections. The price was that McAliskey abandoned her pretension to 'revolutionary socialism' for an 'independent' banner, to make it easier for a 'unity' candidate to draw all the 'people' to vote for her. But the real price was that her anti-repression ticket would also abandon any call to direct action by anti-unionist workers, or any attempt to use the campaign to mobilise and build committees in which anti-unionist workers would lay the basis for the only kind of concrete fight capable of taking the struggle forward. Instead, the campaign has lurched into the most blatant and shameful electoralism in which the only objective is to 'beat' John Hume, thereby, it is claimed, "raising the issue of H-Block" before the conscience of the bourgeois world and thus "pressurising the British into submission". The only winners from this parliamentary cretinist exercise will be the IIP who are clearly using, as they did the Irish Front in Derry, the H-Block protest as a vehicle to replace the SDLP as the respectable, constitutionalist non-violent pro-capitalist voice of Irish nationalism.

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CONTRACEPTION & ABORTION

The absence of any significant protest during the debates on CJ Haughey's Bill to restrict contraception to married users under the paternal and expensive authority of doctors and pharmacists, is a measure of both the political backwardness of Irish society and the confusion of the left. Despite the real possibility of a fighting campaign for free contraception on demand and more than a year in which to organise it, the two political groups claiming to make it a priority issue, the Socialist Labour Party and the Peoples Democracy have squandered every chance of mobilising against the Bill.

The only campaign organisation till recently was the Contraception Action Programme set up by the MSR group (then part of the USFI and now fused under the name of Peoples Democracy). In essence it was a front for the MSR/PD to fight for their feminist perspective after the collapse of Irishwomen United. Its early attempts to present a broad appearance extended to including Fianna Fail's Brian Lenihan as one of its sponsors! It also claimed the support of the ICTU's Women's Advisory Committee and the Labour Party Women's Council, and at other times, the Communist Party, Sinn Fein the Workers Party and the Socialist Labour Party. These names however represented in most cases only the involvement of individuals from these bodies. For, in no way did CAP ever have even the elementary form of a body seriously seeking mass mobilisation through the democratic structure of genuine control by delegates from labour movement and socialist groups. The need of PD to maintain it as a propaganda front for their own feminism meant that they could not risk ceding the organisational influence of their own small group. So, while PD supporters worked in the SLP to use that organisation's resources as fodder for CAP, they proved clearly the sectarian nature of their control of CAP by nevertheless refusing the SLP Women's Committee the right to speak on the CAP platform on December 2nd 1978 - one of the reasons being given as the 'non-political' nature of the CAP, and that Party representatives as such were not invited, despite CAP's claimed affiliation of several labour movement and socialist groups!

Ironically, the PD had no hesitation about having the private family planning Clinics as one pillar of CAP's support. While the secondary issue of defence of the clinics against Fianna Fail may arise, PD's central orientation to them is evidence of their rightward moving petty-bourgeois feminism. Their stuntish adventure in setting up a contraceptives shop (which ended up in the control of a Fine Gael lawyer) and their street-sales of contraceptives in Cork and Limerick are diversions from the building of a campaign. Furthermore, their conception of the kind of campaign needed was clearly defined in the course of the SLP's debates when in opposition to the IWG, MSR/PD went to extreme lengths to misrepresent our call for the building of a working class based movement for women's emancipation and hence a labour-movement led campaign for free contraception on demand. The seriousness with which the IWG in practical action fought for these perspectives, and our non-sectarian co-operation with the December CAP rally - despite CAP's behaviour - was well documented in the SPARK bulletin of the Workers Alliance in the SLP.

CAP's sectarianism towards the SLP resulted in the SLP leadership empirically yielding to our pressure to adopt the slogan of a labour-movement campaign on contraception shortly before expelling the IWG from the Party. A Labour and Trade Union Campaign on

Contraception was spirited into existence by a joint initiative of the SLP and the Communist Party, but it has had no life at all to date apart from thousands of leaflets distributed on the taxation demonstrations. These leaflets merely called for individual initiative through lobbying elected representatives, resolutions in unions etc. and beyond offering an address to contact, they offered no organised leadership whatever, nor an invitation to groups to join in building a labour-movement based campaign.

This Campaign Committee must be opened up to all labour movement, socialist and women's groups agreed to fight for free and legal contraception on demand.

It must build local committees of action based on working class women but bringing other women's groups under their lead.

It must orient its activity to organised workers and the unions-working women primarily, as well as to housewives, and by no means least, to students.

Meetings and demonstrations against the Bill must be urgently organised sponsored where at all possible by organised groups of workers, union branches and Trades Councils. From the platform of every such meeting there must go out a sharp demand on local trades councils and Labour Party branches to support the campaign.

Working Class Women's Movement

No other orientation on this issue can at once advance the immediate needs of women and at the same time begin to develop the political and organisational elements of a working class women's movement - an indispensable element of the communist tradition which has been argued in Ireland solely by the Irish Workers Group in the face of slander from the MSR/PD and sheer organisational sectarianism from the SWT. The IWG showed in practice the dynamism of this slogan in building the miners' wives solidarity group and one of the largest meetings outside Dublin on contraception under the auspices of the Galway Working Women's Group.

Feminism - an Open Door to the Right

The all-class alliance perspective of the PD, the alliance of working class women with enemy bourgeois sisters or at best their political subordination to the petty-bourgeoisie, is particularly poisonous in a working class where so few women are engaged in production or organised in unions, thus leaving the majority of women easy prey to anti-working class appeals. The swell of support from women's organisations for the call for protests by women against unofficial strikes last January, although nothing has come of it yet, illustrates perfectly what is the content of that petty-bourgeois class outlook to which we refuse ever to subordinate working class women.

Last October's exceptionally large anti-rape demonstration (dwarfing the meagre CAP rally) was a further example of the quicksands into which feminist so-called revolutionary socialists such as PD are prepared to lead working class women. Not alone were thousands of working class women subjected to anti-man sentiments by the 'radicals' on the platform but they were also a captive audience for right-wing law-and-order oracles. In fact that demonstration could not and did not offer those thousands even the elementary beginnings of a solution to the problem of violence against women.

ABORTION

Despite the accelerating growth in numbers of women travelling to Britain for abortions, despite the increasingly open debate on

the issue, and despite the growing militancy of Church-backed anti-abortion campaigns, emerging recently onto the streets, the centrist Left - PD and SWT - are still declaring that the time is premature to boldly defend the tens of thousands labelled in Ireland as 'murderers of the unborn', or to begin to lay the basis for a campaign for abortion on demand. At the last SLP Conference to decide an election manifesto, the SWT and PD supporters voted without exception against even mentioning abortion in the Party manifesto.

One of the few speakers against the motion of an IWG supporter on the issue was Betty Purcell of the PD tendency (Republican Socialist). Thus SWT and PD supporters refused to stand over in public the Party policy on abortion which had been overwhelmingly carried in the two previous conferences. This electoral opportunism, encouraged by the PD's feminism which inevitably tails the social climate, represents a betrayal of the 20,000 women legally tarred as murderers. While they passively accepted and collaborated in expelling the IWG from the SLP, they have handed a victory to the SLP right-wing. What protest did they raise against the action of Jim Maher, an SLP election candidate, who wrote to the papers attacking the SLP abortion policy as 'fascist'? None! Did they not in fact go along with the leadership's embargo on statements in the papers - in so far as it censors the left? Let them explain now in their papers and to their members how they can possibly justify this treachery!

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'DEMOCRACY' IN THE LWR

The following is a statement from a former member of the League for a Workers Republic, (LWR), Irish section of the 'Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International'. Copies have also been given to the LWR, PD, SWT and SLP for publication in their journals. It is written in response to the anti-democratic behaviour of the LWR leadership in bureaucratically expelling the comrade in order to prevent her arguing her criticisms within the LWR.

May 1979

I came into opposition in the League for a Workers Republic, after three years of membership, when I produced a balance sheet of the interventions of the League over the past eighteen months. Briefly, the political differences were as follows.

The Labour Party: I criticised their lack of analysis of the Irish Labour Party and their lack of perspective for the work of their supporters within the Labour Party. I also disagreed with the capitulation of themselves and their supporters to the Labour Party's reformism and leadership.

Specifically the LWR puts forward no organisational form whereby workers can begin to build an alternative leadership in the labour movement, nor the concrete elements of a revolutionary programme on which to create that alternative. Instead the League has posed the demand for an All-Ireland Labour Party. This slogan is abstract, incapable of mobilising workers against the labour bureaucracy or the capitalist offensive. To pose thus the organisational unity of the class is abstract because it ignores the concrete struggles against the British Imperialist presence which is the basis for the partitioning of the working class. The slogan answers none of the questions which it raises. It is not given any more content by its ritual twin - the call for a Constituent Assembly. This is equally incapable of being a focus for mobilising the class.

The SLP: I disagreed with the activity of the League in the SLP, namely their refusal to fight the leadership in an organised way around concrete issues from the beginning. Conspiratorially, they refused to take up open tendency rights within the organisation and finally left empty-handed, having convinced nobody of anything but their sectarianism.

Repression: I criticised their orientation on repression. I believe the "International Campaign Against Repression" is not directed towards organising workers to put demands on the labour and trade union bureaucracy but encourages illusions in the latter. I opposed their sectarian attitude to the Student Campaign Against Repression and the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression.

I also criticised their lack of orientation towards a fight for revolutionary perspectives on the woman question and among students involving concrete demands, slogans and organisational forms, and especially in the unions.

I was suspended almost immediately when in private interview with a leading member of the LWR, I refused to renounce my criticisms as incompatible with Trotskyism. The intention of the League to expel me was made clear by the circumstances of the "suspension". An emergency aggregate of members was held to discuss my written criticisms of the group in my absence while I was out of Dublin. It was then demanded of me privately that I should renounce my views by signing the "unanimous" resolution of that Aggregate as a condition of attending the approaching Conference of the League. Members of the LWR made it known publicly that I had been "suspended".

I made my appeal to the Conference of the LWR in writing and delivered it to the LWR offices on April 13th. Not only did I receive no reply, but all knowledge of the venue of the Conference was deliberately kept from me. Thus my elementary democratic right to appeal my suspension was bureaucratically denied to me.

Having denied me the right to self-defence at every point before the membership, the LWR went on to formally expel me at their Conference on April 13-15. After I wrote to them attacking the denial of my right to appeal to conference and stating my intention to publicise these facts, the leadership cynically wrote back saying I could "appeal" to the next conference in June. In the light of their bureaucratic manoeuvres, this "offer" can only mean that they want to cover up and disguise their anti-democratic behaviour.

G. Mc Kay

WHY I JOINED THE IWG

Having been expelled from the LWR, I joined the Irish Workers Group. Below I append the document which I circulated to the LWR members after the League had "suspended" me and in which I appealed for the right to defend my criticisms at the LWR conference. In the positions of that document I find basic agreement with the IWG. I joined the IWG because I believe it to be a genuinely democratic centralist group firmly rooted in the Bolshevik and Trotskyist

method of revolutionary Marxism. The method of this group is, alone in Ireland, capable of forging the revolutionary leadership needed so urgently by the working class.

I observed at close quarters the method of the IWG in their intervention in the SLP while a member of the LWR. Here a revolutionary group fought the reformist leadership of the SLP from the beginning building a united front group of activists in the fight. Unlike the LWR which was forced to slink out of the SLP having convinced no-one of anything but their conspiratorial manoeuvres, the IWG was expelled by the right wing after an open fight for their ideas.

An example of the IWG's fight can be seen on the question of women. This question was virtually ignored by the LWR. I support the IWG's fight for a working class based women's movement. Here the question of women is not ignored, nor is there any capitulation to feminism, something the PD is guilty of.

The IWG did not disregard the centrist groups in the SLP nor treat the membership as incapable of understanding the politics of trotskyism. Therefore, they did not dilute their politics in the manner of the centrists. Instead they sharpened the polemic against the SWT, LWR and PD supporters, and in my own case this had the effect of getting me to think out and re-evaluate my own political positions. Their success in building the Workers Alliance for Action in the Party shows that this was not an isolated experience. The behaviour of the IWG in the SLP was not sectarian. For Marxists, sectarianism has a specific meaning of putting the needs of your group before the needs of the working class. This the IWG did not do.

I observed the IWG working in such areas as Party organisation and recruitment, intervention among students and apprentices, in anti-repression work, for contraception etc. and I was at all times impressed by their serious and non-sectarian approach to action, their dedication in organising meetings, pickets, producing leaflets, selling the Party paper and so on. This record was the reason they won the admiration, and in a substantial way, the support of serious Party members. By contrast the centrist groups put petty organisational gains first and were widely seen as manipulative.

The seriousness of the IWG in fighting for an international programme and the building of a new International also distinguishes them from the centrists who either make a dogma of the 1938 Transitional Programme or, like the SWT, reject this altogether in practice. I believe the Irish Workers Group and its method is the only one that offers a way forward in Ireland to this goal.

G. Mc Kay.

REPLY TO SUSPENSION BY THE L.W.R.

'Why I cannot accept the resolution passed at Emergency Aggregate of Friday 23 March'.

1. "The LWR is thus based on Trotskyism, the continuity of the method of Marx, Engels, Lenin. It is therefore not a centrist organisation nor can it be based on the use of an empirical or other non-Marxist method". (quote from the resolution)

The fact that the League claims to be a Trotskyist organisation

does not make it genuinely Trotskyist. Many other groups claim to be Trotskyist. My conclusions are based on a balance sheet of interventions and their results over the last 18 months. The above is no answer to the charge of centrism.

2. My mention of the "Trotskyist movement" and its divisions was simply a reference to the collection of political currents claiming to be Trotskyist. If it is true that "there is no 'divided' 'Trotskyist movement'" there would seem to be a contradiction in the name of the O.C.R.F.I. which admits to comprising many groups not yet fused into a democratic centralist organisation.

Many of the organisations which claim to be Trotskyist are not genuinely revolutionary socialist. However, the best members of these organisations must be won to the building of a revolutionary communist international. This can only be done through a process of regroupment which has nothing in common with the unprincipled "unity-offensive" of the U.Sec variety. Such a regroupment must be based on re-elaborating the Transitional Programme for the present period in terms of perspectives, strategy, tactics, major slogans and organisational forms. This is the only way in which the International can be rebuilt "in the class struggle".

The League cannot seriously address itself to this task if it fetishises the T.P. as proclaimed in 1938, prior to the Second Imperialist War and the massive expansion of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Europe. The struggle for building an international party of the working class is now, as it was for Marx and Engels, later for Lenin, and again for Trotsky, a struggle to re-apply in each new period the Marxist method and the programmatic gains of the international communist movement the highest of which is the transitional method.

The League's fetishism of Programme (...the programme cannot be challenged whatever happens...) actually conflicts with the creative use of the Marxist method (which is not at all empiricism either), and at the same time it underlies the failure of the League to fight for the programme it claims to uphold. In a period in which the crisis of the working class is precisely one of leadership (and programme), when the "Trotskyist" left is deeply divided in the solutions they offer to workers, revolutionaries seriously concerned with regroupment on a principled basis, must declare their willingness to debate their differences and engage in principled joint action in order to test before the working class the correctness or otherwise of the various strategies and tactics.

The evidence for the failure of the League to apply the transitional method in the present period is clear in practice. I have argued this from its attitude to entry work, trade union work, anti-repression activities and orientation to women, concluding that the objective positions of the League are left-centrist. To summarise, the League has not had the perspective of arguing in the mass organisations of the class for the strategy and tactics of the T.P. as against the offensive of capitalism and imperialism.

Specifically, it puts forward no organisational form whereby workers can begin to build an alternative leadership to the labour movement bureaucracy. Instead the League has posed the demand for an All-Ireland Labour Party. This slogan is abstract, incapable of mobilising workers against the bureaucracy or the capitalist offensive. To pose thus the organisational unity of the class is abstract because it ignores the concrete struggles against the

British Imperialist presence which is the basis for the Partitioning of the working class. The slogan answers none of the questions which it raises. It is not given any more content by its ritual twin - the call for a Constituent Assembly. This is equally incapable of mobilising the class.

The central task is to build now in open struggle the nucleus of the Irish section of a revolutionary International. Concretely, this means in the mass organisations of the class a fight for an organised rank and file movement, on a programme of opposition to the offensive of imperialism and capitalism. This alone can be the basis for a revolutionary alternative leadership to the reformist labour movement bureaucracy. Such a strategy is an integral part of the revolutionary communist tradition as can be seen in the early congresses of the Comintern and the Red International of Labour Unions when these were still revolutionary organisations. It is because in fact the League fails to concretise the TP in terms of such a strategy that it is forced to resort to empiricism in its practice and abstraction in its propaganda.

The method of the League in practice conflicts with its claims to embody the method of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, which at its highest point is the method of the Transitional Programme. It is for this reason that I have called for a fundamental reconsideration of the League's method and its conception of Programme.

3. It is an elementary right in a democratic organisation for a suspended member to argue her views as against her suspension. Instead, in this case I have been asked to renounce my criticisms as incompatible with Trotskyism as a precondition to attending the Conference to speak and vote in my own defence.
SUPPORT MY RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONFERENCE.

- Delivered to the LWR on April 13th 1979 -

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IRAN Solidarity continued from page three

The USFI and OCRFI sections never replied to our arguments on Chile, Portugal, France, any more than they have seen fit to answer our charges of centrist method in areas nearer home. Once again, on Iran, we challenge them to debate the issues of strategy and tactics posed for the working class and oppressed of that country. This is the first step in the vitally necessary work of political solidarity.

And in the months ahead, as Khomeini's gangs and National Guards begin to increase their repression of workers and peasants, solidarity work that takes the issues into workplaces in Ireland will grow in importance, especially in sections here of Combines with plant in Iran such as GEC, Chrysler, General Motors.

Debate on the issues of what's at stake in Iran must be taken also into the milieu of the student and women's movement. In this regard the recent meeting organised by the TCD young Socialists on Iran is to be welcomed as a beginning. Let's hope that at future meetings of this kind the PD and OCRFI - both of whose journals were on sale there, will not be so deafening in the silence of their absence from that meeting.

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SLP BANKRUPT - BALANCE SHEET OF REFORMISM AND CENTRISM IN ACTION

In the National Executive Committee of the 16-month old Socialist Labour Party the Irish Workers Group was represented by three members after the annual conference in January 1979. The Socialist Workers Tendency (fraternal group of the British S.W.P.) was represented by 5 members, and the Peoples Democracy by one supporter representing the 'Republican Socialist Tendency' (RST), (Peoples Democracy being a recently fused sympathising section of the USFI.)

The National Executive meeting (NEC) of Feb. 10th was faced with an ultimatum from the right-wing section of the Party around the Artane & Clontarf branches where Dr. Noel Browne had his closest support as the Party's only Parliamentary member. The right-wing were threatening to disaffiliate unless the Party moved to placate their opportunist electoralism. Artane delegates made it known to the Party Standing Committee (in which SWT was represented by Brian Trench) that they were looking for some kind of "offer" from NEC which would meet their objections to the Party's plans to engage in campaign action for Political Status, and secondly to the Party's emphasis on the struggle for women's emancipation. Both these commitments, in a nutshell defence of the Provisionals and of the right to abortion, were seen as electoral suicide by the right-wing.

In response to this, the NEC after a lengthy debate, found a way to placate Artane - by refusing to implement the Annual Conference decision on Political Status action or on the organising of an anti-imperialist conference. The following three motions and the record of who voted for them illustrate how this emerged,

1. The following motion from the IWG members was defeated by 13 votes to 4 with two abstentions:

"In view of the clear Conference majority for intervention on the National Question and on women's issues, based on the programme of the Party, NEC rejects the restriction of the Party's activity to 'health, education, housing and the economy', and resolves, as well, to mobilise all the organs of the Party to implement fully our policy on the National Question and women'.

Voting for were three IWG (Larragy, Johnston & McGillan), and Joan Kelly (SWT).

Abstentions: Carol Louthe, and Kieran Allen (SWT).

Voting against were: Brian Trench (SWT), Des Derwin (SWT) and Tom O'Connor (SWT); Ann Conway (RST); A. Matthews, J. Daly, D. Boucher, D. Byrne, D. Whelan, M. Enright, M. Merrigan, D. Neligan, D. Bonass.

2. By this stage it was clear that all that had to be done was to "prioritise" the National Question out of existence. Several lists of priorities for Party work were proposed. Matt Merrigan's list was carried as follows: 1. Jobs & wages; 2. Contraception; 3. Housing, health and local elections; 4. Nuclear power. Supporting this list were all except the 3 IWG members, Kelly, Conway, Derwin and Allen. (Trench (SWT) abstained but O'Connor (SWT) voted in support.)

3. Finally the IWG proposed the following motion in the light of Dr. Browne's public statement dissociating himself from the Party's discipline in Dail Eireann because of its position on Republicanism. Only the 3 IWG members voted for it! (Kelly (SWT) and Conway (RST) had left.)

"NEC resolves that Noel Browne, as a TD, cannot remain as a member of the SLP while refusing to act in the Dail as an SLP spokesperson".

The IWG members made clear their complete opposition to the rotten compromise with the position of Browne and Artane in defiance of the democratic will of Party Conference. In the month following we participated in a public statement in the papers attacking the reversal of Party policy after the Party President had given to the papers a formal statement of the Party's attitude to republicanism in which the NEC majority had refused to mention Party support for Political Status for republican prisoners. We then organised a petition for a recall for Party Conference, but when this was tabled at the March NEC the IWG was proscribed in the SLP and its NEC representatives suspended from the Party by a majority of one vote despite constitutional requirements of a two-third majority for suspension of an NEC member.

ROTTEN UNITY OF THE REFORMISTS AND CENTRISTS

Thus, within two weeks of the SLP's first annual conference at which a clear majority of the membership decisively ratified their support for SLP action on the national question - in particular the issue of the H-Block prisoners - the national executive with the aid of the Socialist Workers Tendency had capitulated to the right-wing pressure of the ex-Labour Party bloc around the Artane Branch and Noel Browne. With the argument that they were "keeping the party united" - the time-honoured excuse of every reformist and centrist defending a betrayal of principle and democracy - the party leadership in the most important test yet of whether the SLP could find the path to becoming a genuinely revolutionary workers' party in action as well as in words, revealed a cynical contempt for the importance of both the National Question and the democratic decision-making process of the party conference. After 17 months proclaiming to their critics that they had abandoned the illusions of the parliamentary road to socialism and the manipulative, anti-democratic methods of the Labour Party whence they came, the ex-Liaison leadership (Labour Party left) of Merrigan, Boucher, Neligan, Bonass etc. showed that when it came to the crunch between electoralism or the hard struggle for crucial but unpopular issues like the H-Blocks, they were worthy rivals of Tully, Corish or Conor Cruise O'Brien in betrayal and cynical manipulation.

The decision of the NEC makes a comparison with the Labour Party even more appropriate - in abandoning the party programme of action on the National Question, the SLP effectively became just another 26-county party, and the inevitable fate of all workers' and socialist parties attempting this awaits the SLP. The shameful role of the Socialist Workers Tendency under Brian Trench in defending and supporting the reformist leadership in their hypocritical call for "party unity" at the expense of principle revealed the complete bankruptcy of his group's politics and methods in the task they had set themselves as a so-called "revolutionary" tendency to win the rank and file of the party away from the reformist leaders and their methods.

The S.W.M. (former name of SWT) went through six years of irrelevance and impotence as an independent group before the emergence of the SLP precisely because the same method and politics - economism and opportunism - were in action. Their role in the SLP and on its National Executive as a prop and accomplices to Merrigan, Boucher and Neligan, in suspending unconstitutionally the IWG and driving them out of the branches and committees of the Party, while claiming in public to be defending the IWG and tendency rights, reveals the true lengths Trench and his cronies have gone to abandon the elementary principles of revolutionary marxism. Such actions are the inevitable culmination of a method which celebrates as "realism" the rejection of all need for a scientific marxist programme based on the theory, principles and traditions of international socialism as fought for by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

The role played by the PD tendency (RST) was no better in effect. Having been the first to back down to 'keep the party united', they continued in the most cowardly fashion to retreat before the reformists' threats. Their support for the WAA/IWG petition for a recall of Conference was token - they made no attempt to fight for it, nor to defend the IWG, Party programme (especially abortion policy) or tendency rights, hoping to salvage some support from the wreck of the SLP.

For revolutionary socialists and militants who have fought openly and consistently to apply the fundamental theories and principles of marxism in attempting to create the base for a genuine revolutionary marxist workers' party, nothing that has happened in the SLP should have been unexpected. The priceless lessons and experience of the Trotskyist parties in Europe, America and Britain in the 1930s, employing the entry tactic into reformist and centrist parties shows vividly the inevitable role reformists and centrists play in such parties in holding back and blocking the road to revolutionary politics and methods for the rank and file. The task now is to draw out the major lessons from the SLP experience in order to further clarify the key problems of programme, strategy and tactics, organisation and method, that alone can be the bed-rock for constructing the kind of party that will stand the test of struggle and lead the working-class to power.

1. REFORMISM IN THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

From its very foundation by the ex-Labour Party Liaison group, it was immediately clear from their opposition to IWG motions at the founding conference in 1977 that the ex-Liaison group, whatever their pious intentions, had neither the capacity nor the will to try to learn the lessons of their failures in the Labour Party or seriously undertake the difficult task of building a genuine revolutionary workers' party. Though having abandoned the Labour Party, by instinct, tradition and experience they were steeped in reformist and electoral politics, and the organisational methods it engendered. At best their radicalism amounted to a perspective of single-issue "campaigns" laced with vague left-reformist rhetoric and moralism, notwithstanding opportunistic rhetoric about "learning the lessons of Chile" from Browne in particular.

Repeatedly, every public statement by party spokespersons - mostly ex-Liaison men - on the major and key issues of the day, National Question, unemployment, Trade Unions, women etc., put forward views that were complete distortions of agreed party policy.

These utterances signalled clearly their adherence to the characteristic reformist vote-catching opportunism of dropping "unpopular" policies to suit bourgeois public opinion; also they had set themselves the target of the Local Elections of June 1979 - although they could not yet state it openly, as the supreme goal and test of the party's development.

However, it was also clear from two party conferences that the leadership, whatever numerical advantage it had in the leading bodies, still in no way represented the spirit or the content of party policy or the aspirations and hopes of the best party militants. The leadership had deliberately stayed out of the debates on party policy rather than be seen to be opposing resolutions for active intervention in the working class. They relied upon their supporters - many of them sincere militants with deep illusions in the leadership - to get them onto the leading bodies of the party. For that reason the reformist leadership still retained control of the party organisationally despite its "marxist" programme. In effect, the reformist leadership remained the largest and most powerful undeclared tendency, a machine at the heart of the party determined to block by every means and manoeuvre all attempts to have the party put into fighting action on a 32-County basis what had been decided democratically by party conference. Such machine politics defines the organisational essence of all reformist parties. To fight it in the SLP correctly needed a principled fight by the far-left forces to win the best militants in the party who did want action and intervention in the struggles of their class; and in the process of ideological debate and discussion on the lessons of struggle, to expose the real motives and methods of the leadership to them. The tactic of the united front was an elementary necessity in this situation.

It was clear that a situation where a reformist-dominated machine contrived to prevent the party from systematic and co-ordinated action on all its key policies could only lead to stagnation and decay. As separate initiatives took place throughout the 32 counties, the ideological differences and unevenness increased as the party leadership made no attempt to introduce an education programme to unify the political understanding of the members. As the local election period began to loom, the leadership prepared their attack on the party programme, to scupper its most "unpopular" policies. Firstly, Browne prior to the January 1979 conference stated publicly his opposition to party support for the H-Block protests. Then at the conference he threatened to resign if the censure motion on him from the PD (RST) group was not withdrawn. Mimicking the reformist leaders about the "need to work to keep the party united", the centrists of the PD withdrew their motion. In so doing they revealed all the PDs guff and bluff about "the importance of the national question as the key principle of revolutionary socialism in Ireland" to be so much empty talk.

It was from PD's centrist cowardliness that the reformist leaders took their cue to open up the attack on the tendencies. Using the threats from Artane and Browne to resign etc. if the national question and H-Blocks were not dropped in the election period, they employed successfully the same hypocritical appeal for party unity at the expense of party policy and principle. At the NEC they got the support of the SWT whose open divisions on the matter in no way exonerate that tendency's responsibility as a whole for supporting the leadership. At the March NEC they followed up with an attack suspending the IWG NEC members and an IWG branch secretary, proscribing the IWG as a tendency.

The March NEC also prohibited all tendency publications and public criticism of the leadership - with the support of the SWT who agreed that tendencies should be curtailed. The reformists could not so effectively have blocked the road to revolutionary politics for serious militants in the SLP without the conscious aid from the beginning of the so-called revolutionaries who made up the other various declared and undeclared tendencies in the SLP - the SWT, the RST and the LWR. In order to understand more clearly their politics and methods, we need briefly to look at centrism.

C E N T R I S M

"The two fundamental currents of the world working class are social imperialism (reformism -CS) and revolutionary marxism. Between these two poles come a number of transitional currents and groupings that are constantly changing their appearance and are always in a state of transformation and displacement; going sometimes from reformism to communism, sometimes from communism to reformism. These centrist currents do not have and by their very nature cannot have a well-defined social base. While reformism represents the interests of the privileged tops of the working class and communism is the standard-bearer of the proletariat itself, centrism expresses the transitional process inside the proletariat, different waves inside its different layers and the difficulties of the progress towards revolutionary positions. That is precisely why centrist mass organisations are never stable or viable." (Trotsky's Writings 1930, 'What is Centrism', p. 236)

Clearly from Trotsky's description and definition the SLP under the specific conditions of Ireland where no mass active working class party ever emerged, and from the contradictions within the Irish Labour Party as the result of the last ten years of political developments, North and South, the SLP represented a small centrist type party in which the possibility existed for revolutionary marxists to fight openly among a small but important stratum of militants attracted to the party for genuine revolutionary politics and methods. For that reason alone the IWG decided to enter the SLP from the moment it emerged. Without a principled fight for a clear programme to attempt to carry it the full way to revolutionary deeds as well as words, the best militants in the party were doomed to remain under the leadership of the reformists and inevitably to return to the reformist camp of the Labour Party or drop out altogether. That is the fate of all centrist parties.

However, also attracted to the SLP were the other small Trotskyist groups existing on the Irish left for the past eight years or more. In order to understand how and why these groups played into the hands of the reformist leadership in the SLP we need briefly to look at several other features of centrism analysed by Trotsky.

"One must understand, first of all, the most characteristic traits of modern centrism. That is not easy; first because centrism due to its organic amorphousness yields with difficulty to a positive definition; it is characterised to a much greater extent by what it lacks than by what it embraces....No matter how difficult it is to make a general definition of centrism, which of necessity always has a conjunctural character, nevertheless we can and must bring out the outstanding characteristics and peculiarities of the centrist groupings originating from the breakdown of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals". (Trotsky - 'Centrism and the Fourth International', Writings '33/34, p.232).

Here, Trotsky is writing about small, relatively stable political groupings and parties in many ways similar to those now represented in Ireland. However what distinguishes the modern small centrist trotskyist group from those in the 1930s is that they are the product of the decay and degeneration not of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals but of the Fourth International, the one fought for and built by Trotsky in the 1930s against the opposition of the centrist parties and groups who refused to break with the previous two internationals controlled by reformists and stalinists. The decay and splits in the Fourth International had its roots in the massive defeats of the international working class at the hands of fascism, stalinism and imperialism in the 2nd World War and the period following, and the corresponding failure of the 4th International to re-elaborate a new transitional and international programme to meet the needs of a new epoch of world capitalist expansion and stalinist triumph. While the present trotskyist groups in Ireland have their origins in the events relating to the outbreak of the troubles in the North in 1968-69, two of them, PD and LWR claim programmatic linkage with the international organisations claiming to represent the 4th international built by Trotsky in 1938 - the USFI and the OCRFI. The SWT is the fraternal organisation of the Socialist Workers Party in Britain which abandoned theoretically and politically all connection with the 4th international and its Transitional Programme for workers power. In fact, all of these groups, like their international counterparts, in spite of their more formally worked-out marxism compared to more temporary and unstable workers parties, share between them the common centrist disease of hovering between revolutionary and reformist politics, lack of clear tactics, slogans or direction, a rejection of theory as a guide to action, zig-zagging on principles, and crass opportunism; in particular, a hatred of all those revolutionary marxists who state what is. The apparently opposed features of these groups does not negate their common fundamental disease, as for instance the explicit rejection of theory (SWT), 'theoretical' bluster (PD) or dogmatic fetishism (LWR) all amount to the same failure to scientifically analyse programatically the needs of the working class and base strategy, tactics, slogans etc. in a living way on marxist principles. Instead of clear principled methods and programme they are forced to substitute manoeuvring and petty organisational 'diplomacy' - sectarianism in its correct marxist sense - refusing open principled common action while arguing the differences they maintain.

Nothing underlines the correctness of Trotsky's analysis of centrism more than the actual record of these groups. For nearly ten years under conditions more favourable than most for the development and testing of political strategy and tactics in mass struggles, they have failed abysmally to penetrate the ranks of any section of workers or to draw them to revolutionary politics. The need for theoretical and political analysis of these failures has been an elementary duty for these 'marxists' for years, yet they show, despite one set-back after another, a blindness to their own impotence. The emergence of the SLP and the initial enthusiasm and support of serious militants and socialists should have been the opportunity for these tiny groups to begin to seriously address themselves both to the principled task and duty of open and honest debate on the lessons and experiences of the past ten years of failure; at the same time as they were prepared to join in united front action on the key concrete issues of the day with other marxist and rank and file workers both inside and outside the SLP. In this way both the reformist leadership and reformism, faced with a principled and united challenge to their methods and politics, could have been driven out of the SLP; and the principles for re-

elaborating the elements of a revolutionary programme could have been established.

Such an approach would have shown serious militants that Trotskyists are serious about learning the clear lessons of their own failures and errors and that they had a method of overcoming these failures in order to establish a stronger united revolutionary socialist party. This was the position of the IWG. On the contrary all the centrist groups continued to exhibit the worst combination of cowardly opportunism towards the reformists, and cynical organisational sectarianism on the issues of building a united front of the left for action. We will look at each group in turn.

LEAGUE FOR A WORKERS REPUBLIC (OCRFI)

(Section of the Organising Committee for the
Reconstruction of the Fourth International)

This group displayed the most openly cynical attitude to the SLP which if nothing else revealed the barren sectarianism behind the formal orthodoxy of Trotskyism employed by the LWR. Following the logic of their wholly schematic and formalistic analysis (that the Irish Labour Party as the "mass party" of the trade unions must be the vehicle in which the masses will travel) in order to pose 'correctly' the question of the Constituent Assembly, the Workers Government and workers power, the LWR adopted the mechanical and idiotic position that the SLP was premature and that therefore unconditional re-entry back to the Labour Party was the only correct road if 'history's' plan for the Labour Party was not to be thwarted. This strategy - an affront to Trotskyism to call it so - effectively put Healy and Coulter and other LWR comrades (who never openly became a tendency) to the right of the reformist SLP leadership. Consequently they gave left cover to the reformist claims that by leaving the Labour Party they had indeed broken with reformism. Furthermore, because they considered the SLP some kind of "time-warp" and not a real concrete political party (the product of specific conditions in Ireland) in which to fight openly for one's revolutionary politics, they joined forces with the reformists in opposing those revolutionary socialists who did see the real need to fight the reformists openly for a correct revolutionary programme and method. At the same time they refused to take seriously any active intervention by SLP members in any area of the class struggle, betraying in classic centrist fashion an elitist contempt for rank and file activity.

Their conduct provided the SLP leadership with the perfect excuse to brand all revolutionary tendencies as criminal manipulators, as Healy and Co. certainly were, thus confusing the genuine militants. The LWR's politics and methods got them only universal contempt from every serious militant and socialist in the party. Their formal Trotskyism and the mechanical schema that it produces conceals under the formidable list of utterly abstract democratic demands (posed as 'sign-posts' to 'mass struggles') a limp and cowardly reformism no different in essence from those other fake trotskyists already mummified in the Labour Party - the Militant Group. As Trotskyists, we demand a serious accounting from the LWR of their record in the SLP in the light of both their total failure and the principles and methods of entry work established by Trotsky in his fight against centrism in the 1930's .

THE M.S.R. GROUP - NOW 'PEOPLES DEMOCRACY' (USFI Sympathiser)
(United Secretariat of the Fourth International)

This centrist group's conduct can only be understood within the framework of their overall "strategy" for building a revolutionary party. Like the USFI in general the MSR/PD operate with a conception of building a party which sees the need to create "class struggle tendencies" as a first step "to prepare" the masses for revolutionary slogans and methods of struggle for power. These class-struggle tendencies are not genuine united fronts of revolutionary socialists and reformists (or Republicans) undertaking joint action around common concrete demands in order both to meet the immediate needs of the struggle and carry it forward and more deeply against the system as a whole, which would at the same time break the illusions of the masses in reformism or nationalism through ruthless exposure and criticism. Instead they are opportunistic compromises around either passive or pious propaganda slogans with no call to action or around vague demands and windy rhetoric about 'mass action' thus consolidating working class illusions in reformist or Republican leaderships who in practice determine the content of the 'action'. Trotsky summarises well the exact features of the PD's centrism:

"Centrism is always ready to adopt in words the programme of the socialist revolution; it is not niggardly with sonorous phrases. But the fatal malady of centrism is in not being capable of drawing courageous tactical and organisational conclusions from its general conceptions. They always seem to it to be premature; the opinion of the masses must be prepared (by means of equivocation, of diplomacy, of duplicity etc.). In addition it fears to break the habitual amicable relations with the friends of the right; it respects "personal opinions". That is why it delivers its talons... against the left."

(Trotsky - Writings)

For example, writing in 'Socialist Republic' in Feb. '78 the MSR/PD state that in order to broaden the campaign against repression... "it is necessary to make a conscious effort to include other groups like the Irish Independence Party and then to win over those sections of the population who still have illusions in the SDLP but are in sympathy with our demands". Here the MSR are demanding a joint platform with bourgeois and petitbourgeois nationalists without as much as suggesting the right of socialists to publicly criticise and warn the anti-Unionist masses of the dangers of illusions in such people. Also the MSR make no mention of the necessity to bring anti-unionist workers as class-conscious workers into that struggle.

All the centrist confusion of the MSR/PD can be seen in their attitude to the emergence of the SLP. First they supported and canvassed uncritically for the Independent Labour Campaign of Browne and Merrigan in the 1977 Elections against the trade-union based Labour Party, a campaign whose politics were the mildest left-reformism, no different in essence from the Labour Party. When the SLP emerged the MSR's 'class-struggle' method led them into a position of not fighting clearly for anything at the founding conference at the end of 1977 to draw up the Party constitution. Taking up their characteristic cowardly and opportunistic stance of "not putting people off", at a conference where

Merrigan and Boucher etc. clearly intended to see a reformist parliamentary platform established, they opposed every attempt by the IWG to fight for revolutionary positions. They opposed the demand for abortion as "premature", a position they were never to change even though it was carried at the conference on Policy in May 1978 by a very large majority (they voted for it then having tried to stop it coming on the agenda but prevented anything being done about it !). In April 1979 it was Betty Purcell of PD/RST who spoke against including any mention of the SLP policy on abortion in the Party's election manifesto when an IWG supporter moved a motion to stand publicly by the repeated decision of Conference on the issue. At every turn of the founding conference they attacked the IWG for arguing a revolutionary line, posing the need for 'educating' the party members first before any political debate and decision on 'advanced' questions while the ex-Liaison leaders meanwhile were firmly nailing their reformist colours to the party mast.

Even though it was permitted from the start to openly organise as a tendency, on foot of a motion from the IWG, the MSR/PD members did not openly organise in the Party until January 1979, consoled by the fantasy that they were on the point of a breakthrough against the Republican movement in the West Belfast ghettos on the issue of a 'debate' carried in the pages of Socialist Republic on 'mass action' versus 'militarism' (see "Militarism, Mass Action and the New Resistance" - S.R. March/April '78).

(As events have shown again and again in the past year since the 'major debate' which PD argued "would have immediate and practical relevance to the future direction of the anti-imperialist movement" - S.R. Mar/Apr '78 -, there has been neither mass action against repression nor changes in the Provos' militarist 'strategy'. Indeed, that strategy in the shape of the bombing campaign against civilian and 'economic' targets has re-emerged in Nov. '78 and March '79 in greater force than ever. So much for their claims for the 'great debate'.)

The confusion of the MSR could not have been clearer. Having welcomed and supported uncritically left reformist candidates on the theme of "unity of the left"; having seen the considerable support for Browne and Merrigan in the elections and the support and enthusiasm of many militants for the building of a new party, the tiny MSR group, which in 8 or 9 years of political existence had built no roots in any section of the working class, decided to remain outside the SLP as a competitor to a much larger group moving leftwards and open to ideas to the extent of permitting tendencies. By their action the MSR and their "supporters" in the SLP were clearly and correctly seen as sectarian by many militants who took their decision to mean that the MSR supporters in the party did not want the SLP to be built anywhere in Ireland. Certainly, the record of Conway, Purcell and other MSR supporters went a long way to corroborate that view, for apart from their private manoeuvres around the SLP and the Contraception Action Programme group they made no attempt to build or recruit to the SLP.

Like the LWR, the conspiratorial manoeuvring of the MSR played directly into the hands of the leadership who again were offered the chance to portray Marxists as unprincipled and dishonest. Eventually, facing up to the fact that they were losing out to the SWT and IWG in the party, they formed their Republican Socialist Tendency at the party conference in January 1979 (see their conference bulletin 'Out of the Cul de Sac'). Full of the witless and windy

rhetoric that is used to disguise the puerility of its general politics, plus the habitual slanders against the IWG, none of which it ever substantiated, the RST's bluff about "taking on the reformists" was immediately put cruelly to the test of reality. Having put down a motion of censure on Noel Browne for his pre-conference statement against the Political Status protest in H-Blocks (though it should be noted that they hadn't previously openly criticised the SLP leadership for similar equivocations and betrayals) the fake "principles" and bogus "intransigence" of Conway, Purcell and their cronies was exposed as they withdrew the censure after an appeal from the same reformist leadership whom they had attacked in their conference document. So much for H-Blocks and revolutionary principles. Better to remain "united" with reformist hypocrites to prove how "well-intentioned" and respectable one is! As Trotsky said of such people:

"A centrist, always uncertain of his position and his method, views with hatred the revolutionary principle - state what is. He is inclined to substitute for a principled policy personal manoeuvring and petty organisational diplomacy. He always remains in spiritual dependence on rightist groupings and is inclined to cringe before those who are more moderate, to remain silent on their opportunist sins and to cover up for their actions before the workers". (Writings, '33/34 - 'Centrism and the Fourth International', p. 232)

Though the RST passively supported the IWG in our fight for a recall of Conference it was clear that the logic of their whole unprincipled manoeuvre still defined their tactics. Though claiming to be against the reformists, they still bleated before Boucher and Neligan that the RST did not want to "split" the party, being explicitly congratulated by Boucher, architect of the betrayal of H-Block, in the SLP internal Bulletin where he reports the RST as "adopting a conciliatory line and wishing to stay inside the SLP". The leadership, obviously realising the mettle of these windbags, proceeded to hatchet off ruthlessly all opposition, seeing correctly the PD/RST 'diplomacy' for the opportunistic cowardice it really was. We demand of the PD leadership a full accounting of their tactics in the SLP to their membership, and of their shameful attempts in Socialist Republic to conceal the role of its supporters in aiding the reformists and the SWT to drive the IWG out.

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS TENDENCY

While all the centrist trotskyist groups contributed to strengthening the SLP leadership and to weakening those who were prepared to lead an open fight, there can be no doubt that most of the responsibility for opportunistically supporting the leadership falls roundly on the Socialist Workers Tendency (ex-Socialist Workers Movement). This group had existed for nearly 6 years before the emergence of the SLP. What had characterised its political method was its wholesale abandoning of the revolutionary communist policy that a genuine vanguard of the working class can only be built on the basis of open and principled intervention in all working class struggles, for the demands, slogans, ideas and methods of a clearly defined and scientifically established international programme. Instead, it substituted a workerist and economistic perspective of seeing socialist consciousness growing out of trade union struggles for the bread and butter issues on the shop floor

in exactly the same way as the 'economistic' marxists in Russia, mercilessly criticised by Lenin in "What is to Be Done", had argued.

The SWT's brand of opportunism consisted, therefore, in capitulating and adapting to the trade union consciousness of the rank and file. This logically meant a relegation of all political questions about how to take the trade union struggles beyond the worker-versus individual-employer to a struggle for political power. Likewise, all questions that did not proceed directly from the shopfloor conflict between worker and boss were also seen as secondary - the national question and women being two major issues which the SWM consistently failed to raise on the 'shopfloor' - issues which in their latest phraseology 'impinge' on the work of socialists.

When the SLP emerged the SWM, after nearly six years of failure to grow and with a record of consistent turnover of members (to be expected of a centrist group with no programmatic guide to action), clearly underestimated the importance of the SLP. At the founding conference, like the LWR and MSR they were caught wholly unprepared to fight the constitution draft produced by the ex-Liaison (Labour Left) leadership which was an attempt from the beginning to establish a straightforward electoral reformist programme for the SLP. Without the successful fight by the IWG for revolutionary policies on unemployment, wages, and trade union bureaucracy, and fortendency rights, the party would have emerged from its founding conference as a cul-de-sac from the start for militants. Yet, like the other centrists, the SWM voted against the abortion demand, and joined in the general attack on us by the reformists as being too "extreme" too "sectarian" and "putting people off" etc.

The SWT decided initially to form a tendency but not to build the SLP in the North where they at that time hoped to fuse with Bernadette Devlin-Mc Aliskey's "Independent Socialist Party" in order to maintain a public presence and press independently of the SLP to which they could draw new recruits from the SLP. Like the MSR the SWT did not see or understand that the building of the SLP on the basis of a fight within it for a correct revolutionary programme could be; the means of both posing the question of the division of the trotskyst left and providing an answer to it in a principled manner, simultaneously with the chance to break serious militants from both reformism and traditional republicanism. Having failed to fuse with the ISP - though we cannot imagine any point of principle being an obstacle to such a marriage for these two groups - the SWT plumped for the building of the SLP, acknowledged its own past failures and claimed to recognise the need for a serious reassessment of the past if errors were to be avoided. (S.W. Review No. 1, p.2 & also Goodwillie's article on the origins of SWM) Goodwillie wrote:

"The process of building the party must include an element of differing ideas existing side by side but also an element of all members being forced to re-examine the assumptions they have been making for a long time." (SWR 1, p 7)

On the basis of this statement and the call in the same issue of SWR for the creation of a broad alliance of all those who supported action to turn the party outwards on a three-point programme, on women, the national question and the building of a rank and file movement in the unions, the IWG sent a letter supporting the call and stating our intention to attend the conference. The SWT,

having publicised the conference as open, refused us permission to attend on the basis that the IWG was already a tendency! The IWG considered this as a sectarian attack both upon our right as SLP members to attend any meeting open to party members and a sectarian refusal to join with other revolutionary socialists, whatever our differences in programme, in building a broad action alliance on concrete demands and areas of struggle agreed in debate as a means of turning the party outwards. Five branches joined in supporting our right to attend the conference. We did so and forced the SWT to admit that the conference was "incorrectly" described as "open". In doing so they revealed what the IWG had anticipated, namely that the SWT leadership had no intention of building a genuine united front of all socialists and militants on key issues while permitting and encouraging honest and frank discussions on past errors of strategy as a means of building real unity among trotskyists and others inside the SLP. It was obvious that the SWT meant to continue with the politics and methods that had failed it so clearly for 7 years.

FOR A GENUINE ALLIANCE FOR ACTION

The IWG was then compelled to launch an appeal for a genuinely broad alliance for action to turn the party outwards. Nearly 30 members responded and again an open letter from that alliance (the Workers Alliance for Action, WAA) was sent to the SWT calling for the joint building of the alliance to halt the steadily drifting SLP and to challenge the reformists for the leadership at the next party conference. The SWT again refused stating that differences existed between their conceptions of the rank and file movement and those of the WAA and the IWG had. The SWT's point was of course correct, but again it demonstrated that the SWT did not see that genuine differences could only be addressed through a policy of united action on the key issues, simultaneous with fraternal and honest debate on political differences. The SWT's refusal meant that they were prepared to share a party with cynical LEFT REFORMISTS BUT NOT PREPARED TO UNITE IN ACTION WITH OTHER GENUINE SOCIALISTS AGAINST THAT SAME LEADERSHIP at the helm of a party they were leading to disaster.

This shameful sectarianism maintained the divisions and weaknesses of the left revolutionary socialists precisely at the moment when the reformists began to gather their forces. The SWT having numerical strength in Dublin and control of the party paper (from which they censored most of our contributions for ill-disguised political reasons), considered smugly and blindly that they were most favourably placed for slowly and gradually taking over the party leadership. It seemed to them that as long as they continued with their diplomatic "niceness" and "pragmatism", never criticising the leadership in a "sectarian" manner, while patiently building support for their "commonsense" approach and relying on Trench as the editor of the paper to fill it with the vacuous pieties of Joan Kelly on the North and Des Derwin's plodding banalities on the trade unions, then it was only a matter of time before the leadership fell into their hands. As Trotsky points out of such people:

"Precisely when reformism is forced to renounce itself, transforming or dyeing itself into centrism, some groupings of left centrists, on the contrary, stop short in their development and even move backwards. It seems to those left centrists that the reformists have already grasped almost everything, that it is only necessary not to make exorbitant demands, criticism, extreme phraseology and then with one blow one can create a mass 'revolutionary' party."

(writings '33/34, p.235)

THE 1979 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN JANUARY

The Party's last full aggregate conference and the events afterwards revealed starkly both the extent to which the SWT were prepared to act as policemen for the reformists against the IWG and WAA and the ultimate political price they would pay for such a role. It was inevitable that the Local Government Elections would be the dominant issue at the conference whether implicitly or explicitly. The local elections in the 26 Counties would be the first time the party would show its face nationally in a context of heightened political interest. Accordingly, the face it presented here would decide how it was viewed by workers, women, youth and republicans far more than the written programme decided at conference. The Derry branch submitted a resolution laying out a draft programme for fighting the local government elections that was to address this problem and to force the party through conference to fight the elections on its revolutionary socialist policies. Brian Trench, chairman of the Conference Steering Committee, in collusion with Boucher and Neligan, reformist leaders (though they had no constitutional right to any say whatever in the acceptance of branch motions) refused to allow the motion on the agenda on the philistine excuse that it was too long. In effect the whole question of how the party was to fight the local elections was removed from debate and from conference. Under pressure from the IWG and WAA we succeeded in getting both the National Executive and the National Women's Committee and five branches to condemn Trench's action and to support the right of the motion to be on the agenda. (To no avail in the end as Merrigan bureaucratically ruled out amendments to standing orders as chairman of the opening session, with Trench's cooperation.)

Trench's real reason for opposing the Derry resolution and its demand for the party to fight on clear revolutionary positions on the national question, on women, on jobs and wages etc., was obvious. Given their general belief that they could slowly and 'diplomatically' build their tendency, the SWT were frightened that an open split could occur in the party at the conference on the question of the content of the election manifesto. (Trench and SWT, like the PD group, were standing members as local election candidates also for the SLP.) Having failed to prepare for a sharp fight against the reformists they were determined that no principles of party democracy, the national question, abortion, H-Block etc. would get in their way. Thus they shared along with the Merrigans and Bouchers a determination to prevent any discussion by conference on the election manifesto. This too was at the root of their subsequent appeasement of the right-wing electoralists after the conference.

Aware of the growing criticism of his bureaucratic exclusion of the Derry motion, and lest it be re-instated, Trench manoeuvred a resolution through the Meath branch calling for a one-day delegate conference on the elections. Having got the reformists off the hook of an incipient split by giving an inch, they took the proverbial mile and subsequently packed the special delegate conference with election candidates over and above the delegate entitlement of the branches as laid down in Trench's motion.

ABORTION

At the conference the IWG and the WAA bore the brunt of the fight against right-wing attempts to ditch the party's support for abortion on demand adopted the previous May. Not one single member of the SWT spoke in defence of free legal abortion on demand, and clearly

they were prepared if necessary to allow it to be lost rather than be identified with it too openly. Likewise their cynicism on the woman question in general was revealed. For, having stated in their journal that the SWT stood for the building of a working class womens movement (SWR/3):

"What we need is an organisation that will organise women on a working class perspective and will work to win women to revolutionary socialism" (J. Kelly, SWR /3 p. 13)

nevertheless, on every motion from branches or national womens ctte. putting this position, SWT voted against and backed instead the feminist positions of the MSR/PD (RST). Why? Because they saw these notions as inspired by the IWG/WAA - as one independent speaker pointed out forcibly to the conference. This cynical organisational sectarianism was merely the other side of the coin to their opportunistic capitulation to feminism and their actual opposition to the revolutionary marxist strategy of building a mass working-class based women's movement on a clear communist programme of demands.

ARMED STRUGGLE

The same cynicism was revealed on the important debate on the national question. They opposed a WAA-promoted amendment to their own Belfast motion in defence of the armed struggle. The amendment attempted to lay out a clear position on the dual and inseparable question of defence of the armed struggle (and therefore critical support for the Provisionals in so far as they advance the anti-imperialist struggle), and opposition to the current bombing campaign. While formally acceptable to the SWT they ensured the defeat of both the amendment and their own motion by sectarian opposition to the amendment, handing the leadership an unparalleled breach in the Party's policy on the national question.

ATTACK ON THE TENDENCIES

During the whole Conference, which saw a sustained attack upon the tendencies from the platform, the cracks began to appear in the SWT's veneer of reasonableness. Confusion could be seen on their faces for, clearly, despite their niceness with the reformist leadership, they were being included in the attacks. Only Kieran Allen of the SWT made any kind of defence of the tendency and was forced to criticise the leadership. But he also specifically rejected the appeal from the IWG and WAA for a United Front in action against the reformists. However, after the conference, as the forces around Browne and Artane gathered momentum, encouraged by PD's backing-down, the SWT began to buckle completely. Their leadership could not agree what to do - Trench as usual holding the middle ground, instinctively wanting to compromise but not quite knowing how to dress it up and call it by a "marxist" principle. The vote at the February NEC clearly showed their bankruptcy - some voting for, others against and others, especially Allen abstaining on matters of revolutionary principle.

This cautious pragmatism and petty sectarian manoeuvring was bringing its full reward - a grouping that at its first serious fight proved to have neither ideological or political direction, principle or coherent tactic to offer. Their disgusting conduct at the February NEC reveals the logical outcome of such methods. But even after this, worse was to follow when they opposed a WAA

and RST petition which mandated the recall of Conference to discuss the state of the party. They argued, it was better to rely upon branch resolutions condemning the February NEC. They were against a recall conference at all costs for fear of splitting the party and disrupting their manoeuvre. Like all centrists they put such a manoeuvre and compromise with the right before an open fight to bring the reformists exposed before the membership for a democratic accounting of their betrayals. The prospect of such a conference would not only have driven Browne and his following out of the party but it would have led to a new marxist leadership pledged to uphold in action decisions of party conference. Whatever the inevitable defections of reformists, such a party formed in a concrete struggle would have been a much stronger basis for serious and united intervention in working class struggles and for building a genuine revolutionary party.

IWG warned that branch resolutions were of no use against the party machine to save conference policy. We were right. At the March NEC, Linehan (co-opted with SWT's help) cynically moved a motion that no conference policy had been abandoned and that all the resolutions claiming to re-instate H-Block policy were out of order. This was successfully rammed through! Then Merrigan suddenly produced an un-notified motion and asked that it be taken ahead of the next item which was the petition to recall Conference. All the SWT voted to allow Merrigan have precedence, desperate to stave off the proposed conference which would put not only Merrigan and co. in the limelight but also their own disgraceful record of collusion with the right. Merrigan's motion, carefully worked out, was an elaborate attack on the IWG, proscribing the tendency and suspending all members of it. Though carried by only one vote and thus unconstitutional in the case of NEC members, it was nevertheless implemented immediately.

'DEFENDING' THE IWG

However much the SWT resented the NEC's curtailment of tendency rights, the suspension of the IWG or the abrogation of party democracy, these were a small price to pay to keep their alliance with the SLP reformists in a 'united' party until the Local Elections were over. We were soon to see the evidence of this, for in spite of the SWT's claim that they would defend the IWG as part of the fight to restore tendency rights and party democracy, it was the SWT's members throughout the party who forced the implementation of the suspensions when IWG members correctly resisted and turned up at branch and other party meetings. In the Meath branch it was Brian Trench who ruled as chairperson that a 'suspended' IWG member should leave the branch - minutes after a unanimous resolution for the re-instatement of the IWG! At the National Women's Committee it was SWT members who first moved and voted for the IWG members to be removed from the meeting - including the committee chairperson. Again, at the special conference on local elections on April 7th, Trench as chairperson of the Steering committee voted against allowing an emergency resolution on the agenda on the question of the suspensions which by this time had already led to the disaffiliation of two branches and the resignation of prominent party members. At the NEC meeting in April the SWT voted for an IWG member to leave the meeting (while one of them abstained and another argued to allow him as a silent observer!)

It was no surprise, then, to see the SWT comply with the NEC's suspension of tendency publications and their sale. The SWT

dropped their Socialist Worker Review and produced a 4-page 'BULLETIN' which they gave away 'free' for a 'donation' to comply with the reformists' ban on sales. The Bulletin states in its first issue, page 1,

"The SWT is committed to challenging this slide... Above all we believe in revolutionary democracy... the right to debate our differences in front of party members". Fine words! There is not one word about the IWG suspensions or a call to defend or re-instate us. The SWT informed IWG that they would not defend us unless we undertook to make no public statements on the issue. In other words, although the Party machine is stopping you from arguing your defence within the party, you must not conduct that defence openly outside the party; instead you must rely on the SWT to defend you - the SWT which supported limiting tendency rights, refused to support a recall of conference, implemented the suspension decision, refused joint action with you, censored your articles for the party paper etc. etc. SWT did not apply the same rules to their own members, for when the Belfast branch disaffiliated (leaving no Six-County branch at all) Joan Kelly wrote to the newspapers on the question, cynically expressing solidarity with her 'revolutionary' comrades remaining in the SLP in the South!

CONCLUSIONS

The real crime of the SWT (and the PD tendency) is that they have taught a few serious militants that lying manipulation, hypocrisy, and cynicism about principles and democracy, are not only the preserve of reformists; that some who call themselves marxists and trotskysts (including the LWR) regard such fundamentally anti-marxist tactics and conduct as 'realism'. As junior hangmen and henchmen to Boucher, Neligan, Merrigan etc. the SWT leadership in particular proved itself worthy bedfellows of the Liaison Group. Whatever the belief that they will eventually gain from their tactics, they have in fact ensured that no principled fight is now possible in the SLP. For these people there are no principles left to defend. That is the price of such 'realism'. Instead of a fight and a clean split which was possible on the basis of our call for a Conference, the SLP will further disintegrate whatever its manoeuvres, demoralising those few serious but confused militants still inside.

The SWT and PD's RST will in the process merely have moved rightwards in their opportunistic capitulation to the leadership. They have simply and graphically revealed the truth of our analysis that they are centrists. We call upon the SWT supporters to demand an explanation of their leadership's tactics and methods and their criminal betrayal of the 'revolutionary democracy' they hypocritically claim to defend against the reformists.

The IWG are proud to have been dubbed as "disrupters" of the Merrigans and Bouchers of the SLP, though there is not one shred of evidence that in the whole span of the party we ever failed to work to recruit to it and build it. Indeed the branches in Derry, Belfast and Galway were founded by us! Anyone who read 'Class Struggle' and the 'SPARK' bulletin of the WAA will know that our 'disruption' amounted to warning about the reformist leadership and their constant refusal to state party policy in public or give a national lead on the key issues. Such 'disruption', whether it gets up the noses of thin-skinned centrists or maverick dilettantes is in the revolutionary tradition of Lenin and Trotsky in their battles against reformism and centrism.

IWG was correct to warn about the reformists and centrists. They did betray and sell out. Only the IWG maintained an intransigent defence of the party's programme on the crucial issues of H-Block and woman's emancipation, in particular the call for abortion on demand, against the reformists. The proof of our warnings and the results of our battle justify our pride in our record, and we believe that the comrades won to the IWG by this fight will prove the correctness of the IWG's method. Our banner remains untarnished by the sordid deals and compromises on marxist principle with which the centrists are indelibly stained. By that standard we will continue confidently to fight for the creation of a mass revolutionary party of the working class in Ireland and internationally, a task we believe to be of unpostponable urgency.

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R.A.C.s AND Mc ALISKEY's ELECTION CAMPAIGN

-concluded from p. 8

The P.D. and SWT have given full voice to the McAliskey campaign, their letters to the press no different in essence from the IIP coterie's letters and those of green tory lawyers and town councillors, rapturous about the 'significance' of the vote for her in ending repression and getting rid of the British. Thus the full logic of the RAC 'publicity campaign' of marches and rallies has reached the height of getting McAliskey into Europe conceived as one big publicity stunt.

But Mc Aliskey and PD reckoned without the deep roots of republicanism in the RAC! The Provisionals correctly (but of course one-sidedly) pointed out the utter bankruptcy and impotence of the EEC parliament, that if the H-Block issue were raised there would it have any more significance than if it was raised in Westminster or the Dail? They correctly pointed out the opportunist support of Pat Fahy and his Nationalist cronies. They called for a boycott of the EEC and clearly threatened either to pull out of the RAC or to publish a statement from the prisoners against McAliskey. In this situation, the RAC 'independents' had no answers and a compromise was reached permitting support for Mc Aliskey on an individual basis. This shabby contrivance opens the RAC to the charge that is nothing more than a Provisional front - an allegation impossible now to answer. So, after 2½ years of the RAC, instead of a genuine, however modest, worker-based fight against repression with a perspective of building local committees drawing in other sections of the working class communities and their social and political organisations, relating to all aspects of repression with direct action, openly debating strategy and tactics, we have an RAC campaign without any teeth, under the effective veto of the Provisionals, deeply confused as to how to take the struggle forward with many prepared to accept the ruling of the central RAC yet also determined to vote for Mc Aliskey. The centrists of PD and SWT have paid dearly for their opportunism. They now stand as the most enthusiastic spokespersons for Mc Aliskey alongside the Irish Independence (Nationalist) Party members and followers, all extolling the virtues of the vote as the means of challenging the might of British Imperialism.

IWG CALLS FOR A VOTE FOR McALISKEY as the context for addressing the thousands of sincere anti-unionists committed against repression and for Political Status who have illusions in Mc Aliskey. Our activists in Derry and Belfast have been organising on this basis as far as possible; but central to our critical support is the call to action. BREAK ALL ALLIANCES WITH THE IIP - no welcome for their support, and against the Provos holding back the building of a genuine worker-based and democratic united front against repression.

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IRISH WORKERS GROUP —

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

1 FOR AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PROGRAMME AND A NEW INTERNATIONAL

The Communist Tradition

The revolutionary left consists of fragmented and disunited groups stemming from the only consistently revolutionary tradition to emerge from the collapse of revolutionary communism in the 1920s and '30s. That is the tradition of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International movement. Opportunism, dogmatism and sectarianism have wreaked havoc within this movement. Nevertheless, it is only on the basis of the fundamental elements of this doctrine and method, applied creatively to the new period of capitalist crisis opening before us, that there can be built revolutionary parties and a new International.

The Irish Workers Group holds that the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International was the highest programmatic achievement of the continuous battles waged by Trotsky in the International Left Opposition and the International Communist League against Stalinism, Centrism and Reformism in the world working-class movement, and against Fascism. It therefore represented an international programmatic alternative to the reformist Second International and the Stalinised Third (Communist) International.

The Transitional Programme of 1938 is nothing else but a re-elaboration of the transitional method first clearly outlined by Lenin in April 1917 and further embodied in the programmatic theses of the 1919-22 Congresses of the Comintern. The transitional method is the most advanced development of the Communist programme and strategy in the epoch of Imperialism. It is the only means whereby the historic political principles of the First International (1864) the Second International (1889), the Paris Commune (1871) and the Communist International (1919) could be concretely and creatively applied in a new epoch to pose the way forward from the immediate struggle of the working class to the overthrow of capitalism itself.

Method of The Transitional Programme

The purpose of the Transitional Programme was to become an instrument in the hands of revolutionary workers and communist intellectuals in order to bring the working class onto a war footing internationally. It was a programme which started from the immediate needs of the working class to defend itself and sought to carry the struggle inexorably to the goal of workers' power. Trotsky creatively applied and developed the major tactical and strategic principles of Lenin and of the first four Congresses of the Communist International (1919-1922). He did this in the face of the

Stalinist counter-revolution, imminent fascist takeover, deepening economic and political crisis pointing towards a new World War.

We reject completely the fetishisation of the 1938 Transitional Programme in one form or another by the representatives of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USFI) or the "Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the F.I." (OCRFI). Both of these international currents have proved themselves ideologically and organisationally bankrupt. However, in rejecting the fossilising of the 1938 Programme we in no way identify with those who, in rejecting it, also repudiate the basic traditions, principles and method represented by that programme. These groups, particularly the British "Socialist Workers Party" and its fraternal tendency in the SLP in Ireland, the Socialist Workers Tendency, are equally bankrupt.

We believe that fidelity to the 1938 Programme and its method, to the traditions of the Comintern in its first four Congresses, is fidelity to revolutionary scientific Marxism in its historically most developed form in the epoch of monopoly capitalism. In the new period of capitalist crisis this fidelity demands the re-elaboration of a new Transitional Programme and a new International around it.

Internationalism

Internationalism is the recognition, embodied in the Programme that the proletarian revolution is by no means the result of forces operating in a single country. The proletarian revolution in Ireland is only one subordinate link in the chain of the world workers' revolution. The proletariat, the class which will create communism, is a world class, and capitalism is a world system which, especially in its imperialist phase, has drawn the world together so that no single part is understandable without reference to the whole.

Only for the internationalist is the class struggle always the struggle for socialism. For the social democrat, the Stalinist, and the republican socialist, "more immediate tasks" come to determine everything they do now; achieving civil rights, defending the "national interest", "uniting" the country, defending "democracy" or defending jobs through import controls etc. The point of departure for these groups is what they see as the interest of their "national" working class. Their "socialism" is truly "socialism in one country". For this reason, although they begin as partisans of the Irish working class they end up championing the Irish (or British) constitution, the Irish (or British) parliament, and finally Irish capitalism.

Unless socialist internationalism has practical meaning and informs the work of a Marxist organisation, then a revolutionary combat party will not stand firm in a time of crisis.

The Communist programme is an international programme or else it is utopian. The national orientation of the proletariat can and must flow from a world orientation.

Our fight to build a revolutionary party in Ireland is historically, therefore, only a subordinate part of the fight to build a proletarian revolutionary International. The primary condition for such an International is a developed international programme. A propaganda International - one which as yet lacks mass national sections - can be valid and meaningful as the defender and advocate of such an interna-

tional programme. We reject the centrist view taken e.g. by the SWM according to which an International can only be formed after mass national parties are built.

"While the (workers) Councils can arise only under the condition that there is a revolutionary ferment among the many-millioned masses, the International is always necessary: both on holidays, during periods of offensive as well as retreat, in peace as well as war. The International is not at all a "form" as flows from the utterly false formulation of the ILP. The International is first of all a programme, and a system of strategic, tactical and organisational methods that flow from it.... But the question of the International, as well as the question of national parties, cannot be deferred for a single hour: we have in essence two sides of one and the same question. Without a Marxist International, national organizations even the most advanced, are doomed to narrowness, vacillation and helplessness; the advanced workers are forced to feed upon surrogates for Internationalism. To proclaim as "purely theoretical", i.e., needless, the building of the Fourth International, is cravenly to renounce the basic task of our epoch. In such a case, slogans of revolution, of dictatorship of the proletariat, Councils, etc., lose nine-tenths of their meaning."

-Trotsky, "In the Middle of the Road" - 1935.

2 CAPITALISM HAS SURVIVED BY THE BETRAYAL AND DEFEAT OF THE WORKING CLASS.

Imperialism

The maturing of capitalism into a world system marked its final epoch, the epoch of Imperialism. Imperialism strives for domination instead of for liberty. Its wars destroy the forces of production on a monstrous scale in trying to solve its crises of profitability. It props up barbarous neo-colonial regimes to maintain its interests abroad. It condemns two-thirds of humanity to systematic underdevelopment of their countries, crushing the development of their productive forces and making them sources of super-profits and raw materials for the "advanced" countries.

Revolution

The exploitation and oppression practised by capitalism and imperialism call forth forces of resistance both from the working class and the oppressed masses and nationalities. The major struggles of the working class tend not merely to encroach on the rights of capital but also to expropriate the capitalists. The working class can only liberate itself and all the oppressed from capitalism by wresting the means of social production internationally from capitalist control. It will replace production for profit with production for human need. Because there is no other class it can aspire to exploit, the working class by establishing its own rule will put an end forever to class society.

The activity of the working class in many countries and over many decades bears witness to its revolutionary character. The highest of its achievements was the creation of the first Workers State in 1917. To-day, however, the countries known as "communist" are neither communist nor socialist because the working class does not hold state power in them. Socialism can only be constructed by Workers States based on the democratic power of workers councils.

It can only surpass the productive power of capitalism by creating an international planned economy.

Betrayal of the Working Class

In the age of Imperialism capitalism's survival has principally been the result of two forces - the reformist and Stalinist leaderships in the international labour movement and the growth of U.S. imperialism. After World War I, capitalism, challenged by the first Workers State and a mass revolutionary wave, was saved in its heartlands by the reformist parties of the Second International. The incorporation into the state of the reformist workers' parties and trade union bureaucracy has remained a vital component of capitalist stability.

In the 1920s and '30s the eventual victory of fascism and the destruction of the Chinese Revolution and Communist Party were directly tied to the Stalinising of the Comintern and its counter-revolutionary perspective of "socialism in one country".

Stalinism

After World War II capitalism could not have survived and consolidated without the conscious support of the Stalinised "communist" parties. Notably in France, Italy and Greece the Stalinist parties disarmed the potentially revolutionary forces, giving power back to the bourgeoisie. In East Europe independent working class, peasant and nationalist movements were subordinated to the Russian Bureaucracy's need for stability and shared spheres of interest by the creation of client states to the Russian Bureaucracy.

Born of the Russian Revolution, nurtured on the destruction of what remained of workers' power in Russia and the elimination of revolutionary vitality in the Comintern, the Stalinist parties crossed to the camp of the bourgeoisie. In Russia and East Europe, Cuba, China and Vietnam, they have created states that must be destroyed by workers' revolutions. In the West they offer only class-collaborationist programmes, nationalist and reformist. Stalinism and Stalinist parties, Soviet, Chinese and Eurocommunist, are counter-revolutionary and an obstacle on a world scale to the socialist revolution.

A New Period of Crisis

In addition to the conscious counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinists and Reformist parties, capitalism has only survived as the result of the wholesale destruction of capital in two imperialist world wars and of the strength of leading sections of the working class culminating in the subordination of the world economy to U.S. imperialism and its massive expansion. The exceptional stability and expansion of post-war capitalism has to be understood as a result primarily of these factors. However, capitalism cannot free itself from its intrinsic tendency for the rate of profit to fall, nor in this epoch from the pressures of inflation, increasing instability and a sharpening of competition on a world scale - except at the expense of the working class. The defeat of U.S. Imperialism in Vietnam signalled the sharply deepening crisis of imperialism in general. The victories of the MPLA and Frelimo in liberating Angola and Mozambique from the brutal Portuguese colonial regime resulted in the opening of the revolution in Portugal in 1974 and also thrust a dagger at the heart of South African and Rhodesian racialism and their imperialist backers. In Spain, too, the Francoist dictatorship was shattered thus opening up yet a new front of deepening class struggle in Europe.

Most recently, the overthrow of the Shah in a mass movement relying centrally on the power of the Iranian working class has undermined one of the central pillars of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East and Asia.

This is the objective situation. Subjectively, however, the world proletariat is still led by the reformist politics and parties of social democracy or stalinism. Without revolutionary marxism, no matter what the heroism, courage and determination, the proletariat will not hold state power anywhere. The urgent task for Marxists is to build that leadership based on the programmatic strategy and tactics of a new revolutionary International.

Britain's Crisis

The relative backwardness of British capitalism in the post-war period has magnified for that country the effects of the emerging world crisis. The attempted liberalisation in the '60s of its imperialist policy in Ireland was necessitated by the urgency of rationalising its policy of exploitation of Ireland and of extracting itself from costly colonial commitments. The relative growth of the Irish economy even appeared to make the new strategy possible for a time, but it ran up against a series of social, political and economic contradictions intrinsic to the Partitioning of Ireland upon which British imperialism has based its policy in Ireland for 50 years.

3 BRING THE WORKING CLASS TO THE
HEAD OF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE -
FOR WORKERS POWER!

Partition

The most significant defeat for the Irish working class was Partition, the form in which imperialist domination was consolidated in 1921. The Unionist bourgeoisie and its allies retained the industrial base of the North-East within the new Ulster state; the Southern bourgeoisie eventually settled under the name of the Irish Republic for most of rural Ireland and the few manufacturing centres outside the Six Counties.

In conditions where the nationalist workers of the North still posed a threat to the social and political stability of the Northern regime, the Stormont Government armed itself with an arsenal of repressive legislation, as well as a permanent paramilitary police force - the B Specials. Furthermore, in order to prevent any possibility of Catholic and Protestant workers ever uniting against low wages, unemployment, bad housing etc., it institutionalised wholesale sectarian discrimination against Catholics in every aspect of social life - jobs, houses, education. Equally, the Southern capitalist state, deeply backward economically and socially, due to the impact of imperialism, rested firmly on coercive legislation to maintain internal social order in a period of world economic slump which demanded massive unemployment and wage-cutting if capitalist profits were to be maintained. As an aid to further weakening internally the working class, clerical control over all areas of social and personal life pervaded both the Northern and Southern states.

Carnival Of Reaction

The historic political weaknesses of the Irish working class were intensified enormously by Partition. Following the death of Connolly the role of defending the working class fell to the traditional leaders of the Irish labour movement none of whom had either conception of nor interest in an independent working class struggle for national freedom. As the War of Independence began the leadership of Sinn Fein and the Labour Party increasingly sought to repudiate Connolly's and the Irish Citizen Army's example. Ultimately, such policies led step by step to the final treachery of accepting Partition and the role of Irish Labour as loyal henchmen of the first Free State Government.

As a consequence the grip of both nationalism and Loyalism over the working class as a whole was strengthened. It thus widened the gap between trade union economic struggles for wages etc. and the political struggle for national independence and freedom. The deformed and stunted Irish Labour Party testifies to the effects of Partition on the development of the Irish working class who still electorally support the bourgeois populist nationalism of Fianna Fail.

Rebirth of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle

With the development and expansion of world capitalism in the post war era through the increased role of finance capital in the process of accumulation, both Irish states have fallen more tightly under the grip of the long-term interests of British and World imperialism. This necessitated both an attempt at moderation of the worst aspects of the Northern state and simultaneously the end of the "independent" protectionist policies of the Southern regime. The attempt to "reform" the Northern state, however, brought to a head all the contradictions that Partition had created. The Northern state was irreformable. Just as it had been established as one unit, it could only be abolished as such if the nationalist workers were to escape from the rule of Orange bigotry. It was their magnificent attempt to do this that has brought the forces of British imperialism into an offensive against their uprising and against their defenders, the IRA.

At the same time, it revealed just as sharply the other contradictions of Partition - the real nature of the Southern capitalist regime as the long-standing and brutal accomplice of British Imperialism. Its role has been not only to wipe out the IRA in the South but also to make sure that the Irish working class there play no role in the resistance of nationalist workers in the North. For them to do so would open up the path to a working class solution to the national struggle, the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism and the setting up of a Workers Republic.

The National Question And the Struggle For Workers Power

Therefore, the unresolved national question remains the most vital struggle around which to unite the majority of Irish workers in the fight for their own state power. Imperialism, whatever its form, dominates the interests of the Irish working class on a 32-County basis. It is the common enemy of all workers. In order

to defeat it and the capitalist system which strengthens its grip a revolutionary marxist international programme must spellout sharply and clearly a strategy whose tactics, slogans, demands and popular organisation, when taken up by workers must:

- (a) link concretely the economic battles of Southern workers with the imperialised nature of the southern economy and its state as well as its role in directly aiding British imperialism in the North;
- (b) link concretely and step by step the anti-imperialist struggle of nationalist workers against the Northern state and the British Army to the capitalist policies of mass unemployment, low wages, high prices etc. carried out by the bosses and their state machine;
- (d) link every struggle for democratic rights to the perspective and need to fight for Workers power, seeking to mobilise the organisations of the working class as the leadership of all such struggles, especially for the rights of women to equality socially, legally and economically - for abortion, contraception and divorce; for separation of church and state; against all forms of repression or censorship; against all electoral gerrymandering, and for abolition in the South of the "vocationally" elected Senate; for annual general elections at a fixed date and free access to the media for all political parties except fascists.

Republicanism

The organised Republican Movement is historically the most militant expression of Irish nationalism. However, the Provisionals, despite all their political camouflage about socialism, the workers, and about opposition to capitalism, stand for the strictly revolutionary nationalist demand for independence and unity. Thus their 'strategy' is the purely physical-force struggle to drive the British Army out of "occupied" Ireland. Their strategy offers no answers to the presence of British imperialist and capitalist interests on a large scale in the South where no British army exists. Neither does it confront the collaboration of the Southern state despite the massive blows dealt to their organisation in the South.

In essence, the Provisionals ignore both the class nature of the states North and South and the need to base all struggles on the only class capable of overthrowing capitalism and imperialism - the working class. It is for this reason that the Provisionals' campaign taken as a whole has remained divorced from the organised working class. This is most clearly seen in the persistence of their bombing campaign against civilian and 'economic' targets, which has failed in its stated objectives of driving out the British presence. The only effect of this bombing since the fall of Stormont has been to alienate, confuse and demoralise the anti-unionists in the North and the majority of workers in the South. It has merely provided an excuse for poisonous propaganda by press and state in Britain and Ireland against the anti-imperialist struggle.

Our Strategic Perspective

While in no way supporting the call for a ceasefire, we call for an end to the bombing of civilian or 'economic' targets, and for the building of a mass political movement, against imperialism and the Northern state, based on the organised working class North and South.

Only on this basis can we:

1. build the armed front of workers, socialists and republicans;
2. build revolutionary workers' councils;
3. prepare the mobilisation of the masses for a General Strike;
4. fight for an all-Ireland Government of Workers' parties to defend every gain of the masses in struggle;
5. smash both states and replace them with the class rule of the Workers' Republic, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

While these major elements of our perspective are in no way immediate demands at this time, it is nevertheless absolutely necessary to argue this perspective if we are to give meaning to the strategy of permanent revolution in Ireland. Certainly, a failure to argue for this as the perspective of our anti-imperialist and anti-repression work is to end by tailing republicanism and offering republican militants no real alternative.

Action Programme for the Anti-Imperialist United Front

The struggle to build a mass political movement against British imperialism and its allies in the Irish ruling class must begin by building resistance to all forms of imperialist repression, torture of political detainees, denial of political status, special courts etc., and for defence of anti-imperialist fighters. Only on this basis can the co-ordinated mass organisation be built which will be capable of forcing the British Army to withdraw unconditionally.

The struggle against Army terror, torture by police, and repression North and South, can never be separated from the goal of overthrowing imperialism and the capitalist states in Ireland. Only a working class-based movement under the leadership of revolutionary socialists and their programme is capable of effectively carrying through the immediate struggles and extending them into an offensive. It is urgent, therefore, to mobilise organised workers with their unique industrial strength in a fight to oppose repression and torture.

The Trade Union Campaign Against Repression must be built on this basis, seeking to win workers North and South to the perspective of industrial action on the most immediate demands and for an end to all special courts, the repeal of all repressive legislation, the defence of all detained under such laws, for a working class inquiry into torture and conditions of political prisoners to be conducted by the labour movement under rank and file inspection and control.

While continuing to build independent working class organisations against repression as the basis for a mass united front against imperialism, and capitalism, we call for joint action with other anti-imperialist groups on the basis of united front principles, namely that the campaigns be open to all who accept the agreed necessary concrete demands, and that at all times we retain the right to argue for our own programme in front of the masses, especially on questions of aims, tactics and strategy. We seek to involve trade-union-based bodies in such action and to make their economic power in strikes, sit-ins etc. the key weapon of the fight. In order to take the struggle beyond defence, we argue as the basis for joint action: BRITISH TROOPS OUT NOW; RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS NORTH AND SOUTH; DISBAND THE ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT!

The Protestant Working Class

The Protestant Unionist working class in the Six Counties is tied politically to the reactionary and pro-imperialist Unionist bourgeoisie and its state historically on the basis of marginal privileges relative to the Catholic working class. Held in thrall to the unionist and loyalist ascendancy through the systematic cultivation of sectarian and anti-republican ideology, the Protestant working class is incapable of even beginning yet to realise its historic role as part of the world proletariat. Even its sporadic upsurges of economic militancy against its own bosses, where it necessarily forged links with the anti-unionist workers, has been compromised and smashed all the more easily through appeals to their anti-republicanism and their loyalty to the Six County state.

Despite ten years of fragmentation of the Unionist political monolith and the abolition of the Stormont Parliament, the trade union bureaucracy still maintains a Partitionist structure through the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, conceding hegemony in the organised working class in the North to the interests of Unionism. The relative ease with which strike action in 1979 against low pay (as part of the campaign by British public sector workers) collapsed reflected the deeply compromised nature of the economic combativity of unionist workers despite their sharing with anti-unionist workers some of the worst economic conditions in Western Europe.

The Protestant working class can only be broken from Loyalism through the mobilisation of the majority of the all-Ireland working class such that, at the same time as it fights to throw out the British imperialist presence from Ireland - political, military and economic - it fights on an internationalist programme to overthrow the ruling class North and South, smash both states and establish its own direct control of society through a planned economy based on workers councils.

4 PUT THE LABOUR MOVEMENT ON A WAR FOOTING AGAINST THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE

Economic Backwardness

North and South the statistics of unemployment, prices, wages and housing rank with the worst in Western Europe, and in the South health services and social welfare reflect the same profound economic backwardness despite the presence of some of the most advanced international industry. State revenue, drawn mainly from workers' taxes, is used on a massive scale for the formation of capital in the hands of private capitalists, mostly multinationals, who are additionally exempted from taxation on exports and are free to export enormous profits. Demographic factors resulting from century-long emigration and the high birth rate are magnifying the problem of future unemployment to an extent utterly insoluble for Irish capitalism. There still remains also a substantial class of small farmers economically dependant on the large-farmer class which under EEC conditions has firmly established itself as the most powerful section of the native Irish bourgeoisie.

Divisions in the Class

The divisions in the Irish working class are many and profound, between North and South, between unionised and non-union, between men and women, craft and general workers, public and private sector, unionist and anti-unionist. The extreme sectionalism of its organised struggles is reflected in the existence of almost 100 separate unions. In addition, the political backwardness of the rank and file is re-inforced by a labour bureaucracy which historically balances on these divisions in the class, especially the Partitionist and sectarian divisions imposed by imperialism.

Labour Movement Bureaucracy & Reformism

The Trade Union Bureaucracy is a caste of mostly paid and unelected or unrecallable officials who function as brokers between capital and labour, disguising their trampling on rank and file democracy as "professionalism" and as being "in the interests of the union as a whole", structuring branches so as to remove decision making as far as possible from the shop floor, using secret ballots and handed-down 'recommendations' to separate burning issues of wages, jobs and conditions from debate and the creation of a fighting leadership; invoking the full weight of fetishised rules and merely formal structures to legitimise every deception, compromise and sellout that is their stock-in-trade.

As such they function on behalf of the capitalist state and in collusion with it to domesticate the working class in the unions. Ideologically this caste justifies itself by appeal to a thoroughly reformist political perspective which refuses to challenge the basis of the "wage contract", the capitalist system itself. Thus they preach the bourgeois ideology of a "fair day's work for a fair day's pay", the "legitimate interests" of the shareholders, the neutrality of the state, the possibility of socialism by reform, the defence of labour by bourgeois laws and industrial tribunals, industrial "peace" through "good relations" and most insidiously, chauvinism and the "national interest".

The separation of economic and political struggles which is intrinsic to reformism finds organisational expression in the affiliation of the major unions (in the South) to the Irish Labour Party. The historically stunted nature of the Labour Party and the adhesion to it of only a minority of the class underlies the cliquish nature of the combined labour and trade union bureaucracy in Ireland and the relatively bloated nature of its trade-union wing in particular.

Thus the labour movement bureaucracy has presided over sellouts of jobs through massive redundancies, wage-cutting through class-collaborationist wage agreements and social contracts, the continuation of unequal pay for women by reliance on the bosses state to legislate for it, and most criminally and abjectly betraying the anti-unionist working class through the most cynical collusion with the Northern State throughout ten years of struggle. North and South, in the face of growing waves of repression, internment of political activists, police and army brutality and torture these agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class never even opened their mouths except to spout empty rhetoric or divert the mass waves of anger of the rank and file at events such as Bloody Sunday. Even in the face of the murder of a union shop-steward in RUC custody in 1978 they dared not call for any protest action.

The Need for Class-Wide Political Answers

The trade union leadership in both North and South have been able to sell their treacherous deals because the political questions thrown up by the combined effects of huge unemployment, large scale factory closures, high inflation and the existence in recent years of Labour Parties in Governments have ideologically confused many good militants. No longer can simple reliance upon sectional militancy answer the questions faced in every struggle by workers. The basis for a way forward can only be provided by clear political alternatives to the solutions of government, Labour Party, trade union leaders and so-called trade union lefts, alternatives which must be weapons for the rank and file on a class-wide basis.

A Rank and File Movement Against the Capitalist Offensive

Therefore, we stand for the building of a rank and file movement in the trade unions on a programme of opposition to the capitalist offensive, a programme flowing at all times from the revolutionary perspective of workers' power. The fight to democratise the unions is thus a fight for a rank and file revolutionary leadership on the basis of a coherent, interconnected and strategic alternative to the false answers of reformists (Labour Party), stalinists (C.P. and SFWP), republicans and feminists or centrists (LWR, SWT, PD). On the basis of such a strategy organisations of struggle must be built which will not collapse when confronted with the existing leaderships in the working class and anti-imperialist movement.

Indeed, such a fight must create new structures as organisations of struggle which heal the divisions in the class between unionised and non-unionised - especially women, between the employed and unemployed, and must link tenants organisations, organised housewives and anti-imperialist groups in broad labour-movement campaigns.

For, the present deepening period of crisis compels the capitalists to intensify their efforts to enforce wage restraint in the face of inflation (for which the working class bears no responsibility) to cut social spending, to privatise public services for profit and to further incorporate the unions into the state apparatus, including the extension of "workers participation" schemes. Additionally the compulsion to preserve their rates of profit leads them to attack women's right to work, especially married women, or to have equal pay, in order to drive women back into unpaid domestic toil as part of growing ranks of the reserve army of the unemployed.

What We Fight For

In the workers movement we fight for the total independence of the unions from the state and from all legal or other legal shackles on the right to organise or strike.

We fight for militant class policies of direct action, for all immediate and partial demands which increase and strengthen the morale of the working class.

We fight against all attempts to make the workers pay for the crisis of capitalism through the loss of the partial gains won by generations of struggle; and therefore:

- for equal pay, a national minimum-wage, substantial increases and the sliding scale of wages to fully compensate for inflation;
- for full pay and the sliding scale of hours as the answer to lay-offs or short-time working;
- for the banning of overtime, share out the work under shop-steward control, for shorter hours - all without loss of pay and for permanent useful public works and social service schemes at union rates under workers control to bring the unemployed back into production; for the unconditional right of women to work;
- for full union organisation of the unemployed and women seeking work as a means to intensify the fight for these demands..

Transform the Labour Movement

- for all officials in the trade unions and Labour Party to be subject to regular election and immediate recall and to be paid the average wage of their members;
- for workplace trade union branches with branch meetings in work time;
- for shop-stewards committees to be built in every workplace or factory estate and to be represented in trades councils and local labour parties;
- for shop-stewards combine committees in every industrial combine;
- for industrial unions and amalgamations and a single Congress of all unions; democratise the Congress of Trade Unions! Abolish the separate Northern Committee!
- for democratic lay union conferences with all decisions binding on officials;
- for a national rank and file shop stewards movement against the capitalist offensive;
- for closed shops under rank and file control and an end to 'sweetheart' deals between union leaders and bosses on unionisation; for trades councils to campaign for complete unionisation of workers;
- for workers' defence against picket-breaking squads of scabs, army and police - for an end to the noxious 'two-tier picket' system and direct action to defy injunctions against pickets.

Workers Control

We fight against all attempts of capitalism nationally and internationally to rationalise production for the sake of profit by productivity dealing, redundancies and closures;

- for an end to business secrecy: Open the Books!
- for work or full pay;
- for occupations of plant, holding it as ransom to force nationalisation under workers control without compensation.

We fight for a working-class counter-offensive to impose workers' control (not participation) on production, the only conclusion to this struggle being a planned economy and a Workers Republic.

We fight for practical solidarity with workers in struggle throughout the world, for international unity of trade unions and for links between the rank and file of different countries, especially in international Combine committees in the multinational monopolies.

Against Reformism: The United Front & the Workers & Small Farmers Government

At the very centre of this perspective must be a governmental answer, a Workers and Small Farmers Government, to deprive the ruling class not simply of parliamentary office but also of control over the real state forces, army, police, bureaucracy and economy. Such a governmental answer does not mean that the workers parties take over the existing machinery of class rule. Instead it represents the central link in a strategic and tactical chain of slogans, demands and organisational forms which have as their starting point the immediate and most pressing needs of struggles of thousands of workers and their families, and leads necessarily when taken up by workers on a united front basis to the breaking up of the state apparatus and replacing it through revolution by the democratic organs of working class power.

It is only from this perspective that the building of a rank and file movement can be seen as the basis of a United Front of the working class against the sharpening onslaught of capitalism. Such a United Front of the working class is the tactical means whereby revolutionaries take forward the most pressing struggles of the class for its needs on the basis of unity in action with the majority of workers who still have illusions in the reformist leaders of the labour movement.

At all times preserving their political independence in such joint action the revolutionaries seek to educate the workers through exposing in practical struggle the treachery of the reformist leaders and by building organs of struggle which can go on to fight for the needs of the class when the leaders sell them out. The revolutionaries never cease in that united front to argue for their programme, strategy and tactics to put the class on the offensive for workers power.

Elections

Elections are only one particular instance where the united front tactic is applied. Short of having the capacity to offer an electoral alternative, revolutionaries must in many if not all areas call for a critical-support vote for the reformist workers' party as against the nakedly capitalist parties, i.e. for the party in which the majority of class conscious workers still have illusions. Such support is an act of class solidarity, but aimed as it is at getting the ear of the mass of workers for united front action, independently organised by the rank and file and placing demands on the reformist leaders so as to expose them, it is support for those leaders only "in the same way as a rope supports the hanged" (Lenin).

We reject the claim of the Centrists that the interests of the workers are served by calling on them to "vote left" in the varying degrees that stalinists and left reformists offer "more left-wing" programmes based on no real following in the class. Besides turning one's back on the only means of addressing the mass of reformist-led workers, such a position would be to offer as an alternative to reformism new false solutions which would be all the more dangerous an obstacle to revolutionaries in the degree of their left-rhetoric.

Thus, the perspective of a Workers Government on a programme of standing over every gain of the masses in struggle and of beginning to neutralise the armed power of the bourgeoisie and arming the workers, is the form of the United Front at the level of Government.

We therefore link the building of the rank and file movement, at all times, in our propaganda and agitation, step by step to

- the call for a general strike
- the building of revolutionary workers councils
- the call for a Workers and Small Farmers Government of all workers parties, and
- the smashing of both states in Ireland in order to establish the class rule of the Workers' Republic - the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

5 AGAINST CENTRISM - FOR REVOLUTION - ARY SOCIALIST REGROUPMENT

For revolutionary marxists the struggle against reformism cannot proceed except hand in hand with a struggle against centrism in all its forms, for in struggling to build the nuclei of a revolutionary International and its national sections, those centrist fragments of the far-left claiming to offer a revolutionary programme must be exposed in a polemical battle of ideas and in the open criticism of their programmes in action as obstacles and false alternatives.

For Trotsky, battling for the Fourth International in the '30s, the centrist groupings were seen as "originating from the breakdown of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals". He stresses that centrism "of necessity has a conjunctural character" and that "nevertheless we can and must bring out the outstanding characteristics and peculiarities of the centrist groupings". Applying the criterion of the revolutionary method as embodied in the early Comintern and Trotsky's own battle for the Fourth International, we believe that the "Fourth International" since World War 2 has been a centrist force. Lacking the mass base of the major stalinist or social-democratic parties, it has not been susceptible to the same kind of corruption. However, as a propaganda organisation and an ideological current it has perpetually fudged and bowdlerised even the basic programme of the movement in the interests of accommodation to one or other so-called 'revolutionary' movement. Organisationally as well, it is divided to the point of chaos. To the degree that such a propaganda organisation is wrong and inadequate, it can only be a road-block and not a bridge. Especially harmful are its pretensions - bluffing and blurring its record of failure, never drawing the lessons, blustering about in the name of the 'Fourth International', obscuring, hindering and mystifying what we need to do.

Internationally the record of the Fourth International since the World War has amounted to betrayal of the working class in its need for a clear revolutionary line which, however few the forces to fight for it, could have won relatively major gains for the international revolutionary communist movement, especially in situations of deep political crisis such as Chile, Portugal, Iran and Peru. Instead, the opportunism of the FI groups has resulted in tailing popular fronts, conciliationism, or often the confining of the proletarian programme to fetishised democratic demands.

The centrism of the current represented by the Socialist Workers Party in Britain and its sister group in Ireland, the Socialist Workers Movement/tendency is all the more definite in its abandonment even of the fight to build an International. Its record internationally was characterised beyond any doubt as thoroughly opportunist and unprincipled in its attitude to the Portuguese revolution when it first solidarised with the PRP/BR and ended by conveniently erasing even the memory of its relations with a bankrupt group that effectively disappeared in conditions most favourable to the growth of a revolutionary current.

The period of entry of the IWG into the socialist Labour Party, a left-reformist split from the Labour Party claiming to renounce reformism and drawing in the centrist and revolutionary currents and many serious militants, confirmed at close quarters in concrete and repeated ways the bankrupt centrism of the LWR (OCRFI), the PD (USFI sympathiser) and the SWT. Their refusal to fight against the left-reformist leadership, their constant blurring or holding back on the fight for revolutionary positions, led the latter two to take the side of the left-reformists actively or passively in expelling the IWG - even while they claimed to agree with us in principle on the position we were expelled for defending. One of the most decisive and undeniable acts of treachery of the SWM and the PD was in first opposing, later passively accepting and finally burying the call for free and legal abortion on demand as a basic democratic right for women in Ireland at a crucial time.

The experience of their opportunism is most aptly summed up in Trotsky's article, Centrism and the Fourth International, of Feb. '34:

"Precisely now, when reformism is forced to renounce itself, transforming or dyeing itself into centrism, some groupings of left centrism, on the contrary, stop short in their development and even move backwards. It seems to them that the reformists have already grasped almost everything, that it is only necessary not to play with exorbitant demands, criticism, extreme phraseology..."

The strategic need for revolutionary regroupment necessitates the sharpest and most frank characterisation of the centrism of the fragments of the "Fourth International" - in debate in front of the working class - if the best elements of those groups are to be won to the building of a new international and the development of its programme in struggle. For, in essence the divisions in the Trotskyist movement internationally reflect the failure precisely to clarify an international programme adequate to the international crisis of leadership in the world working class.

6 FOR A MASS WORKING CLASS BASED WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The roots of sexual oppression, have throughout history, been linked to the existence of class society. In capitalist society in particular, it is rooted in the special role allotted to women within the nuclear family as childminders and husbandminders, that is in doing the jobs of washing, cleaning, clothing, feeding, childrearing, educating and socialising, etc. Instead of the cost of these social functions being borne by capitalism they are paid out of the wages of the working class because domestic toil cannot be turned into a source of profit and capital accumulation. Thus the domestic toil of women, their domestic slavery, allied to their exploitation as cheap productive labour on a limited basis, is fundamental to the need of capitalism to maintain its profit rates.

Working Class Women

The vast majority of women are active and dependant members of the exploited classes in Ireland - working class and small farmer. The oppression of working class women means for the vast majority their forced exclusion from production and from full membership of the ranks of their fellow working-class men and trade unionists. It is, in consequence, a major division and weakness in the trade union movement, aided and abetted by the sexist ideology within the leadership and membership of the male-dominated unions. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that women workers do not show much enthusiasm for the trade union movement, underpaid as they are at work and oppressed within society and the family. The passivity of many working class women has its roots in these conditions, and upon it the ruling class and trade union leadership depend, as on the many other divisions and weaknesses in the class, to hold back the fighting strength of the union movement as a whole.

Imperialism

Under the conditions of British imperialism, the oppression of women in Ireland has always taken an especially acute form. The material and ideological role of the family and of woman's place within it as the 'natural' limit of her social and personal aspirations, assumed enormous importance for Irish capitalism and British imperialism in their plans to keep the Irish working class divided within itself. In the formation of the two states in 1922, all the reactionary features of churches and religion were marshalled by the rulers North and South to keep Irish women, and especially working class women, rooted to the home.

Control of education, censorship of any basic information about sexuality, denial of contraception and abortion, abolition of the limited divorce laws in the South, combined with the most limited and meagre welfare provisions, reduced women effectively to a prisoner of the state within the family.

Therefore, a programme for women's freedom must be directly and immediately linked to the fight to bring working class women back into production as full members of their own class. That programme therefore cannot be separated organically from the programme and struggle of the working class as a whole for workers' power and socialism.

Women's Movement

The struggle of working class women is one major part of the struggle to build a revolutionary socialist party based on that class. As one of its tasks such a party must lead a fight to build a mass women's movement based on and led by the working class.

This organised movement of women, while not being tied organisationally to any party, if it is to grow as part of the working class struggle as a whole, must have at its head revolutionary socialists and their programme. There can be no politically "autonomous" women's movement. Attempts to build such "all-class" alliances or 'non-class' women's movements in Europe, America, Britain or Ireland have failed disastrously. We must learn the lessons of the failures of Irishwomen United, CAP and the Belfast women's groups. All failed to understand the need for theoretical clarity on the foundation of their strategy and tactics.

Therefore, we fight primarily in the labour movement and among working-class women generally for all aspects of equal economic rights with men, for full control by women of their bodies, for socialisation of childcare and domestic toil, for full personal independence and freedom and for their fullest participation in the organisations of the working class. We seek to raise in all our propaganda and agitation among women the perspective of our strategy for workers power, and to this end we fight to win the support of organised working class women for all aspects of our programme, particularly the struggle against imperialism.

A. Economic Equality

In order to end discrimination against women in economic life whereby they are super-exploited as cheap manipulable labour and as housewives and domestic unpaid slaves, we campaign for the following demands, fighting for direct action where possible towards achieving them.

1. For equal pay for work of equal value, to be fought for on the basis of wage comparisons not restricted to the particular locality or job; for opposition to any form of job grading designed to counter equal pay claims.
2. For a national minimum wage for all, linked to the adult male industrial wage with full automatic compensation for inflation.
3. For separate taxation of married women independently of their husbands and equal tax allowances irrespective of sex or marital status.
4. For an end to all discrimination in social welfare against women and for full eligibility of all unemployed women claimants for full unemployment payments whether married or not.
5. For a shorter working week and overtime ban without loss of pay and for state-financed schemes of useful public works and social services at union rates to create jobs for women and men.
6. For every woman's right to work fully and equally with men; for unconditional opposition to every attempt to lay off women workers single or married.
7. For equal rights of access to all jobs on sole condition of ability.
8. For equal access to training, apprenticeship, educational courses, scholarships, grants etc.
9. Against discrimination against women on small farms in social welfare, employee insurability and ownership rights.

B. Trade Unions and Women

Because the weak trade union organisation of women on the one hand makes them easy prey for anti-union sentiments and strike-breaking, and on the other hand leaves them open to continued super-exploitation, we fight for the fullest participation in the labour and trade union movement principally through the following demands.

10. For an intensive campaign by the unions, especially trades councils for full unionisation of working women now, regardless of size of employment, especially in office-cleaning, hotel and catering, domestic and retail employments.
11. For workplace union meetings during working hours to facilitate women's participation, and provision of creches at union meetings.
12. For the right of women in unions to caucus separately from men as a campaigning or consultative group or preparatory to full union meetings.
13. For special elected committees in unions to promote and give a lead to action for women's demands.

C. Fertility and Maternity Leave

Unless women have full, free access on demand to all necessary means and the best available advice to afford them complete control of their fertility, their right to work remains precarious and they thus remain open to gross exploitation. Equally, to prevent pregnancy forcing women out of work, it is imperative that in fighting for women's economic rights we raise the following demands;

14. For free and legal contraception available on demand through the health services to women and men, married or single; for comprehensive sex education including birth control methods, in schools, and freely available literature; for expert advice through the health services.
15. For free and legal abortion on demand to be available to all women; for defence of the thousands of women in Ireland who have had abortions against the slanderous charge of murder and criminality.
16. For six months maternity leave with full pay, with no loss of job security, sick leave entitlement or pension or promotion rights.

D. Child Care and Domestic Labour

In order to overcome the role of domestic slave imposed by capitalism on women both in the area of child care and the care of the aged or sick dependents, it is necessary to fight for the maximum possible socialisation of domestic toil including the areas of laundering and food. The main points we fight for are:

17. For provision of free professionally-staffed creches under union-control in workplaces; and under community control on a 24-hour basis in local areas. For comprehensive pre-school provision and professionally run play centres for children.
18. For a comprehensive community care system in the health service providing trained domestic help for aged and invalided dependents.
19. For a free nationalised health and pharmacy service, an end to state-subsidised private medicine and for the provision of the best gynaecological, maternity and child health care for working class women and children, equally with wealthier sections.

E. Personal Independence and Equality

A working class women's movement must smash and dismantle the legal, constitutional and social structures whereby women are denied equality in law and personal life, have the least possibility of escaping a failed marriage, are treated as chattels and are often deserted without maintenance and with children. We must also seek to end the rigid sex-role stereotypes which underpin this discrimination through education and the media. We therefore campaign for:

20. Free legal divorce at the request of one partner, with adequate maintenance for dependents of divorced persons.
21. For an end to all laws which make a woman legally dependent on her husband.
22. For student and teacher union action to oppose all forms of sexism in education; for unions to enforce the right of reply to all sexism in the media etc.

F. The Struggle For Democratic Rights And Against Imperialism

Because imperialism has divided Ireland into two reactionary states stunting the development of democratic rights and conferring enormous social power on church institutions fundamentally opposed to women's liberation, no working-class women's movement can grow or be won to a socialist programme unless it takes up the struggle for full democratic rights as part of the fight for national freedom which was abandoned by the Irish ruling class and its agents in the labour movement. We therefore seek to raise in women's struggles:

23. For a free, secular, co-educational and comprehensive system of education at all levels and a complete end to church control.
24. For complete separation of Church and State in all areas: public representation, hospital services, mental health services, marriage registration, adoption services, adult education, youth organisations, borstals, social-work services, poor relief, overseas aid etc.; and for fully nationalised social services in all areas and an end to public subventions of church agencies.
25. For abolition of all censorship of publications, films and broadcasting; for full freedom of expression on questions of sex, birth control and abortion.
26. For an end to all repressive legislation, North and South, and the abolition of special courts.
27. For British Troops out of Ireland now!

7 BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The only programmatic basis around which a revolutionary party can be crystallised in struggle is the re-elaboration of the Transitional method of revolutionary communism as applied to this new period. This means a ruthless avoidance of sectarianism, opportunism and centrism in all their forms and the defence of marxist principles at all times. Whatever the obstacles there can be no long-term gains for any strategy which fails to link day-to-day struggles for reforms and immediate and partial demands to the perspective of workers power. That is, to raise every struggle to its highest level - the level of the revolutionary party and its programme.

To this programme we seek in every struggle, economic, political and ideological, to recruit the most class-conscious workers in order to build a democratic centralist mass revolutionary workers party.

Democratic Centralism

The need for a centralised party does not emerge merely from the necessity to counter the centralised form of the capitalist state. A revolutionary party must embody the highest class consciousness. It attempts to recruit advanced militants in order to become the real leadership of the working class. It formulates a scientific strategy on the basis of which its members undertake their activity. Therefore, its inner life and organisation exist for these aims. The politics are centralised from the experience of debate of the members in the branches to the national conference and national committee, and to the members from the debate and decisions of the Party conference and national committee through Party fractions and district bodies.

The centralism, the subordination of the lower to the higher, serves a political purpose. Decisions democratically arrived at must be strictly implemented to prove in practice their correctness or error. Such decision-making requires a seriousness about political discussion. To be effective it needs the active promotion of debate among the members by the leading comrades. Only in this way can the programme's positions be tested, revised and strategy and tactics modified accordingly. Only in this way can the real workers' leadership emerge in men and women not only fighting for revolutionary politics in and through every struggle, but also judging and evaluating these experiences in frank and open discussion.

It is for these reasons that democratic centralism demands primarily a cadre organisation. Otherwise, formal commitments to democratic centralism conceal an almost total absence of political debate because the basis for recruitment is solely 'militancy'. For a revolutionary movement recruitment must take place on a political basis - on understanding of the programme and the ability to play an active part in fighting for it.

UNITY

IWG sets itself the task of fighting for revolutionary unity based on a principled programme. The elements of this programme are the basis for our current work and activity. We will co-operate in a non-sectarian way with all those who agree with us in whole or in part. We seek fusion with all those with whom we have fundamental programmatic agreement. Principled debate and discussion will be the first major step towards the creation of a collective Marxist leadership alone capable of providing the resources adequate to seriously developing the programme and building the Party as one component, in Ireland, of a new International. This historic task of the working class, with the day-by-day deepening of the world crisis of imperialism, becomes more and more urgent and unpostponable.